*STAR WARS: THE ACOLYTE* LESLYE HEADLAND!

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE | ISSUE 226

# STAR WARS INSIDER

Exclusive
An All-New *The High Republic* story!
Fiction!

25 YEARS OF LEGO® STAR WARS™

# LEGO® Star Wars!

25 Years and building

## WAR STORIES

AUTHOR ALEXANDER FREED INTERVIEWED

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# CELEBRATE 60 YEARS OF MARVEL'S AVENGERS!

Featuring Iron Man, Captain America, the Hulk, Hawkeye, the Vision, Scarlet Witch, Black Panther, Quicksilver, and many more!

Lavishly illustrated with stunning art, this must-have tribute also includes profiles of the talented creators behind the team's ongoing adventures!

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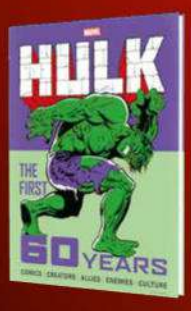

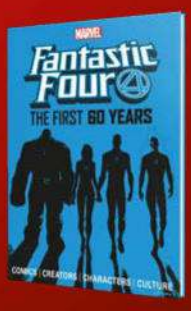

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TITAN COMICS

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

# "Hello There!"

I was probably too old to be buying toys when the first LEGO® *Star Wars* sets were released back in 1999, but I couldn't resist getting involved when the famous Danish brand journeyed to the galaxy far, far away. After all, my fascination with LEGO® was already firmly entrenched, with the Classic Space line functioning as a proxy for future *Star Wars* sets when I was a kid. The range is still going strong 25 years later, having diversified into popular animated series and multiple videogames along the way. I'm still picking up fun sets to this day, like the cute Brick Headz Tusken Raider that's sat on my desk right in front of me. Unopened. Waiting. Excuse me for one moment!

(30 minutes of fun building time later!) Sorry about the mess. Where was I? Oh yes... This issue we're celebrating a quarter century of LEGO *Star Wars* with an in depth look at how the range was originally devised, and the ins and outs of creating the very latest sets. We also explore the natural history of purrgil, the hyperspace traveling space whales recently seen in *Star Wars: Ahsoka*. We talk to author Alexander Freed about his storytelling contributions to *Star Wars*, and actor Amanda Lawrence about her role as Commander Larma D'Acy in the sequel trilogy.

Last, but certainly not least, we talk to Leslye Headland, the creator of *Star Wars: The Acolyte*, about the incredible new series that is currently streaming on Disney+. I'm sure there'll be a LEGO set based on the show coming along any time now. Time to smash open that piggy bank again. I have spoken.

**Christopher Cooper**
Editor

## MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS...

**Lydia Kang**
@LydiaYKang
Poet, practicing physician, and author of young adult and adult fiction, Lydia's *The High Republic* novel *Cataclysm* is available now.

**Jay Stobie**
@StobiesGalaxy
Writer, media consultant, and Wookiee fan, Jay is a regular *Star Wars Insider* contributor, and commentator for many sci-fi outlets.

**Melissa T. Miller**
@melissatruth
Scientist and science writer Melissa visits Comic-Con every year to purchase new *Star Wars* paraphernalia for her pet dog.

**Mark Newbold**
@Prelect_timing
A writer for U.K. sci-fi magazine *Starburst* and a *Star Wars Insider* contributor since 2006, Mark is an Honorary Friend of the 501st Legion.

**Amy Richau**
@damyrichau
Amy is a regular contributor to StarWars.com, and is the author of *Star Wars: I Love You, I know: Lessons in Love and Friendship.*

**Harvey Hamer**
@TDDBooks
A British science-fiction and fantasy author with an interest in history and mythology, Harvey has a "small" *Star Wars* and LEGO collection.

## CONTACT US

Write to us
UNITED STATES
*Star Wars Insider*, Titan Magazines, 2819 Rosehall Lane, Aurora, IL, 60503, U.S.A.

UNITED KINGDOM
*Star Wars Insider*, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP, U.K.

**Email us:**
starwarsinsider@titanemail.com

Call us
To subscribe in the U.S. please call toll free on 800-261-6502. For U.K. and all other destinations please call 01778 392085 or +44 (0) 1778 392085

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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE
STAR WARS INSIDER
ISSUE 226

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**Editorial Assistant** / Ibraheem Kazi
**Art Director** / Oz Browne
**Designer** / David Colderley

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**Story Group** / Pablo Hidalgo, Leland Chee, Emily Shkoukani, Phil Szostak, and Kate Izquierdo

**CONTRIBUTORS**
Arezou Amin, Mary Fan, Harvey Hamer, Lydia Kang, Mark Newbold, Melissa T. Miller, Amy Richau, Jay Stobie, and Dan Wallace.

**SPECIAL THANKS TO**
Lucy Goldsmith, Erich Schoeneweiss at Random House, Holly McIntosh, Joseph Taraborrelli, Andrea Towers and Jim Nausedas at Marvel Comics, Lizzy Draeger, Tracy Cannobbio, Greg Grugsby, Ian Kintzle, Lillian Noble, and Kylie Walker at Lucasfilm. Kevin P. Pearl, Samantha Keane, and Eugene Paraszczuk at Disney.

**TITAN MAGAZINES**
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**DISTRIBUTION**
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**U.S. Newsstand Distribution** / Curtis Circulation Company
**U.S. Bookstore Distribution** / The News Group
**U.S. Direct Sales** / Diamond Comic Distributors
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**SUBSCRIPTIONS**
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**Canada subscriptions** / 818-487-4575
**U.K. subscriptions** / 01778 392085
email: swmag@servicehelpline.co.uk

For more info on advertising contact
adinfo@titanemail.com

(USPS 003-027) (ISSN 1041-5122)

*Star Wars Insider* is published eight times per year (January/Feb, Mar/April, May/Jun, July/August, September/October, November/December) by Titan Magazines, a division of Titan Publishing Group Limited, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP.


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PUBLISHER'S U.S. AGENT
2819 Rosehall Lane, Aurora, IL 60503. Periodicals Postage Paid at Aurora IL and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to Titan Publishing, *Star Wars Insider*, PO Box 147, Lincolnshire, IL 60069
U.S. subscriptions $49.99 per year; Canada $64.99 and U.K. £31.99.
U.S. edition printed by Quad.


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STAR WARS INSIDER

# CONTENTS

ISSUE 226

**20**

***Star Wars: The Acolyte***

***Insider*** **speaks to the creator of the new Disney+ series.**

Subscribe to *Star Wars Insider* Page 58

**06**

### Launchpad

*Insider*'s regular roundup of the latest *Star Wars* multimedia, publishing, and collectibles news.

**20**

### Leslye Headland Interview

The creator of *Star Wars: The Acolyte* reveals the themes and ideas that fuel the exciting new Disney+ series.

**26**

### Purrgil Power

A deep dive into purrgil lore, exploring what we've learned about the space leviathans from *Star Wars: Ahsoka*.

**32**

### 25 years of LEGO® *Star Wars*

A journey through the history of the LEGO *Star Wars* phenomenon with creatives behind the range.

**40**

### Amanda Lawrence Interview

The actor who played the sequel trilogy's Commander Larma D'Acy reflects on her *Star Wars* experience.

**46**

### Art Wars

*Insider* casts a critical eye over the meanings behind galactic artforms, from temple paintings to Twi'lek Kalikori.

**52**

### Alexander Freed Interview

The author behind *Star Wars: Alphabet Squadron* on telling stories from the Old Republic to the Battle of Endor.

**60**

### A Certain Point of View

How can one galaxy be home to so many big secrets? Our resident holocron keeper seeks out the truth.

**74**

### *The High Republic* Exclusive Fiction

The *Aurie* crew race to save Ghal Tarpfen in "Family Ties" by Lydia Kang.


## INCOMING TRANSMISSIONS


**39**

### Prize Giveaway!

Win a set of charming stackable *Star Wars* glasses!

**64**

### Worldwide

Blending books with baking, and getting heavy with Mando cosplay!

**68**

### The *Star Wars* Archive

Our visual history of the making of *Star Wars* continues.

**80**

### Jedi Master's Quiz

Test your knowledge of *Star Wars: Ahsoka*!

STAR WARS INSIDER

# LAUNCHPAD

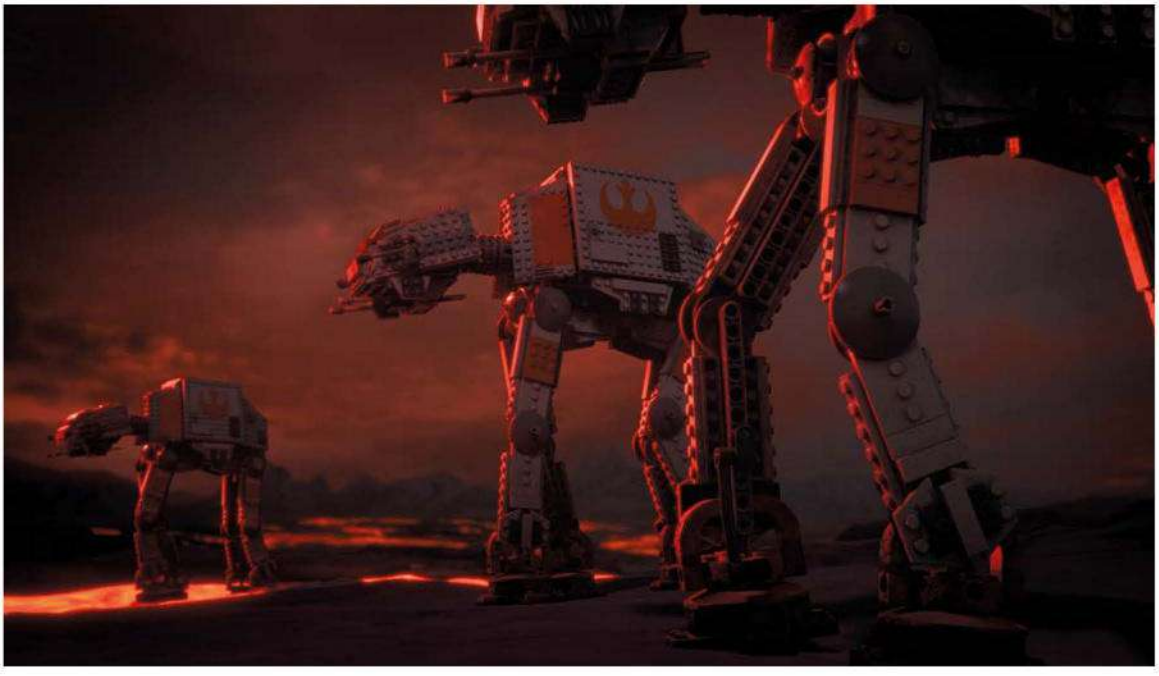
NEWS / BOOKS / COMICS / TOYS / GAMES / FASHION

# The Rise Of Darth Jar Jar!

## All-new LEGO® *Star Wars* series heads to Disney+

**Revenge of the Sixth (May 6) is a date celebrated by fans of *Star Wars*' darker side across the world, and this year's big day came with news of a brand-new animated series from Disney+ and Lucasfilm that turns the galaxy on its head.**

LEGO *Star Wars: Rebuild the Galaxy*, a four "piece" special landing on the streaming platform this September, follows a nerf-herder named Sig Greebling (Gaten Matarazzo), who inadvertently scrambles the entire galaxy when he unearths a powerful artifact called the Cornerstone in a hidden Jedi temple. Thrust into adventure in a new, wondrously wild, and twisted version of the galaxy far, far away, Sig finds that good guys are bad, bad guys are good,

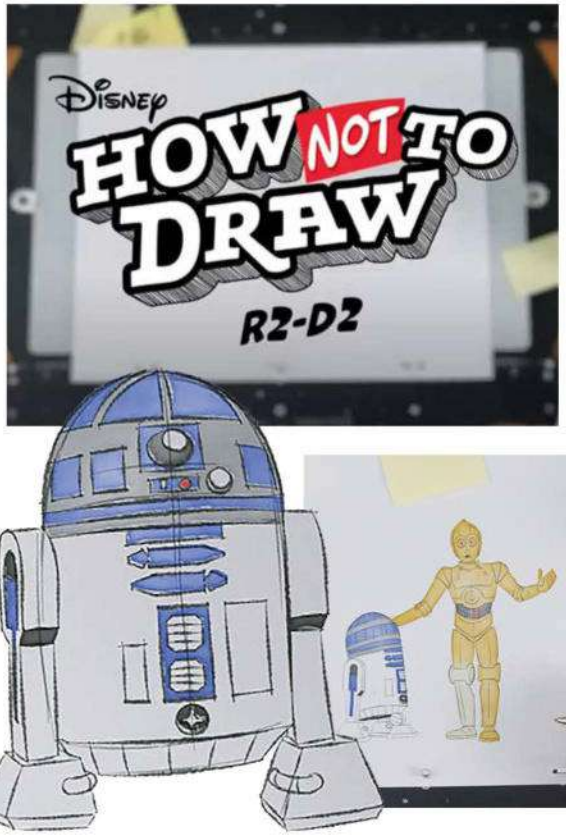


and the fate of everyone and everything rests upon him becoming the hero who can put all the pieces back together.

A teaser trailer, available to watch on StarWars.com, reveals glimpses of rebel AT-ATs, Imperial X-fighters, Ewok bounty hunters, and even—in the biggest twist of all—an evil Sith Lord known as Darth Jar Jar!

"It's hard to believe that it's been twenty-five years since the ground-breaking collaboration between Lucasfilm and the LEGO® Group began," executive producer James Waugh recently told StarWars.com. "In that time, LEGO *Star Wars* has given our fans the unique power to unlock their imaginations and play with the galaxy's elements in any way they can conceive… and build. It's with that playful spirit in mind that we set out to 'Rebuild the Galaxy' like never before."

The talented voice cast also features Tony Revolori (Dev Greebling), Bobby Moynihan (Jedi Bob), Marsai Martin (Yesi Scala), Michael Cusack (Servo), Ahmed Best (Darth Jar Jar), and Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker). Respected comedy writers Dan Hernandez and Benji Samit are the showrunners, and executive produce the series alongside Lucasfilm Animation's James Waugh, Jacqui Lopez, Josh Rimes, Jill Wilfert, Jason Cosler, and Keith Malone. Chris Buckley directs with Daniel Cavey and Dan Langlois producing.




# Drawing Droids

## An animated how-to with Mark Hamill

**A fun *Star Wars* episode of Disney Channel's *How NOT to Draw* series landed on YouTube on May 4th, 2024, with the surprise return of two stalwarts from the saga lending their voices to the animated short.**

In the episode, which begins as a straightforward R2-D2 illustration tutorial but quickly turns into a slaptstick comedy across a drawing board involving jawas and C-3PO's head, Mark Hamill provides the narration and Anthony Daniels reprises his role as the famous golden protocol droid.

"Having Mark Hamill voice the animator felt like a fever dream," storyboard artist Kevin Leal told StarWars.com, adding, "It was such an unreal feeling to hear [Hamill and Anthony Daniels'] voices over my storyboards in the animatic."

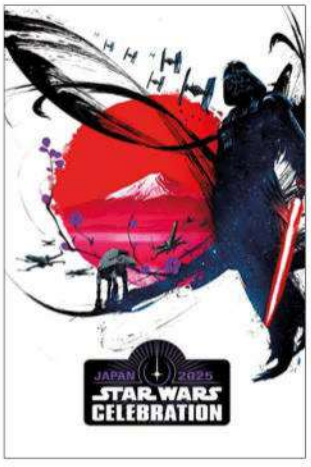
The short - from Disney Branded Television, produced by Disney Television Animation with animation services provided by Flux Animation Studio - was directed by Steve Hirt and executive produced by Gino Guzzardo and is available to stream on Disney Channel YouTube. Search for @DisneyChannel.

# A Ticket To The Stars

## A flying start for *Star Wars* Celebration 2025

**While tickets for *Star Wars* Celebration Japan are selling fast, fans can also book themselves onto flights that will carry them to Japan in galactic style aboard jets decorated with incredible *Star Wars*-inspired livery.**

Japanese airline ANA has themed a duo of its Boeing 787 Dreamliners as droids R2-D2 and C-3PO for scheduled flights from varied destinations to Japan's Narita and Haneda international airports for the biggest event on the *Star Wars* calendar. Taking place on April 18-20, 2025, at the Makuhari Messe convention center, key art was released in March featuring iconography that blends the *Star Wars* galaxy with the host nation of the 2025 event. Keep up to date with the latest news and announcements of guest star panels, events, photo opportunities, and exclusive reveals at **StarWarsCelebration.com**.



# Return Of Dejarik

"Space Chess" comes to life

**The game of holochess known as dejarik was Chewbacca's favorite pastime when traveling through hyperspace. Now fans can play the game at home with the *Star Wars*: Galactic Archive Series Dejarik Board Game.**

Featuring eight miniature plastic pieces based on the creatures designed by Phil Tippett for *Star Wars: A New Hope*, you can move the Ghhhk, the Molator, the Houjix, the Kintan strider, the K'lor'slug, the Mantellian Savrip, the Monnok, and the Ng'ok according to the specially designed rules that come packaged with the game. Each piece lights up during game play on the USB-powered board that faithfully recreates the dejarik table that was the social hub of the *Millennium Falcon*. Available at Disney Parks and **disneystore.com** priced $99.99.

## PRODUCTION DIARY

*Star Wars* movies and television programs coming from a galaxy far, far away....

### NOW STREAMING

STAR WARS THE BAD BATCH

**Season Three**
**Starring Dee Bradley Baker and Michelle Ang**
Disney+

STAR WARS THE ACOLYTE

Starring: Amandla Stenberg, Lee Jung-jae, Manny Jacinto, Dafne Keen, Jodie Turner-Smith, Rebecca Henderson, Charlie Barnett, Dean-Charles Chapman, and Carrie-Anne Moss
Disney+

### COMING SOON

STAR WARS SKELETON CREW

**Starring Jude Law, Ravi Cabot-Conyers, Ryan Kiera Armstrong, Kyriana Kratter, and Robert Timothy Smith**
Disney+

### IN DEVELOPMENT

STAR WARS AHSOKA

**Season Two**
Starring Rosario Dawson as Ahsoka Tano.
Disney+

STAR WARS THE MANDALORIAN

***THE MANDALORIAN AND GROGU***
Directed by Jon Favreau.

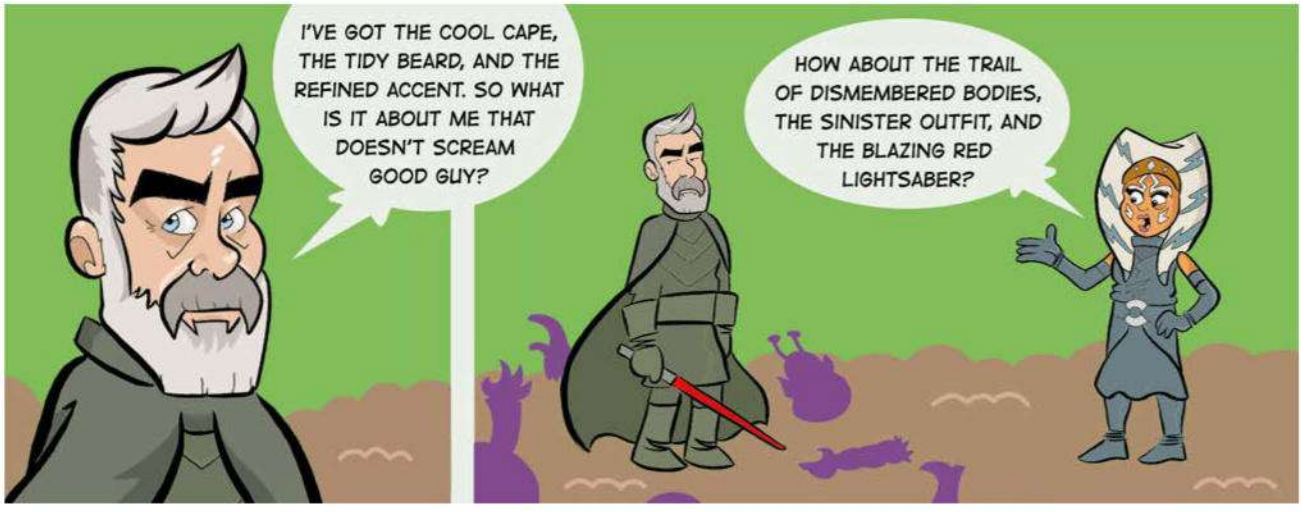
# Boonta Eve Bounty

## Prep your podracer for the Tatooine racetrack

Anakin Skywalker's podracing against Sebulba won him the hearts of the Boonta Eve Classic's crowd, and Iron Studios harnesses the same exuberant energy for its Anakin's Podracer Demi Art Scale 1:20 Statue. Based on original references from *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*, the polystone statue depicts Anakin at his podracer's controls as he speeds through the sands of Tatooine in the midst of an action-packed maneuver. Measuring 23.4 inches long by 7.1 inches tall, this 9.9-pound statue can be the centerpiece for any collection. The limited-edition statue, which comes with a detailed hand-painted base, is priced at $755 and can be purchased on **Sideshow.com** and **Ironstudios.com**.

# THE LIGHT SIDE

By Jamie Cosley


I'VE GOT THE COOL CAPE, THE TIDY BEARD, AND THE REFINED ACCENT. SO WHAT IS IT ABOUT ME THAT DOESN'T SCREAM GOOD GUY?
HOW ABOUT THE TRAIL OF DISMEMBERED BODIES, THE SINISTER OUTFIT, AND THE BLAZING RED LIGHTSABER?

# Friends from the Forest Moon

## Find a clearing for this endearing Ewok

From woodland warriors to rebel heroes, Ewoks demonstrated a gregarious resourcefulness that proved pivotal to toppling the Galactic Empire at the Battle of Endor. Based on the pop-surrealist artwork of Mab Graves, Sideshow's Ewok Designer Collectible Statue focuses on a more tranquil time for the Ewoks, as the 7-inch-tall statue portrays an adult Ewok holding its infant in a warm, benevolent hug. The piece stands on a removable black base, and its cloth garments are sculpted to give the cloak a weathered appearance. Visit **Sideshow.com**, where you can pick up your own Ewok Designer Collectible Statue for $120.

# A Phantom Fighter

## Infiltrate the galaxy with Darth Maul

When the Trade Federation lost track of Queen Amidala and her companions, Darth Sidious tasked Darth Maul with hunting down his royal foe. Inspired by the covert craft that the Sith Lord used on his journey to Tatooine, the LEGO® Group has crafted this 640-piece, 11-inch-long version of Darth Maul's Sith Infiltrator, priced $69.99. Armed with two spring-loaded shooters, a droid-dropping function with three probe droids, and four LEGO *Star Wars* minifigures (Darth Maul, Qui-Gon Jinn, Anakin Skywalker, and an exclusive 25th anniversary Saw Gerrera), the brick-built ship also boasts Darth Maul's *Bloodfin* speeder. Available now on **LEGO.com**.

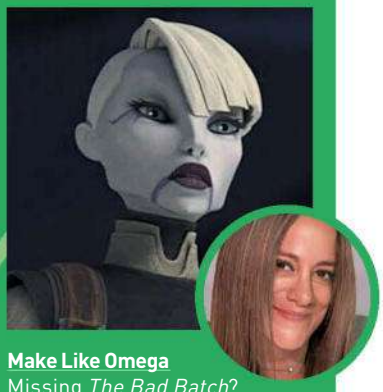
## The *StarWars* DotColumn

Fascinating features and articles from the digital vaults of StarWars.com

Add StarWars.com/Insider to your browser bookmarks to enjoy *Insider*'s pick of the best of the official *Star Wars* website.

**Empire State**
StarWars.com discovers how Industrial Light & Magic put "the Empire" in Empire State Building for Imperial March.

**Ventress Strikes Back**
Actor Nika Futterman talks to StarWars.com about the return of her fan-favorite character in *Star Wars: The Bad Batch*.



**Make Like Omega**
Missing *The Bad Batch*? StarWars.com's Kelly Knox's guide to crafting your very own straw tooka doll will cheer you up.

# Drawn to Thrawn

## The Grand Admiral makes his comeback

A master tactician whose innovative strategies struck fear into his opponents, Grand Admiral Thrawn defied the odds and succeeded in returning from his exile on Peridea.

Iron Studios have developed an exquisite Grand Admiral Thrawn Statue in 1:10 Scale that shows the authoritative officer as he appeared in *Star Wars: Ahsoka*. Hand-painted and standing 9.6 inches in height, Thrawn strikes a defiant pose atop an ancient stone pedestal, wearing the white tunic befitting his rank. This polystone Grand Admiral Thrawn Statue retails for $155 on **Sideshow.com** and **Ironstudios.com**, with an expected ship date of the first quarter of 2025.

# Unlimited Power!

## Play your hand in this battle over the galaxy's fate

While Emperor Palpatine often manipulated events in the *Star Wars* galaxy from his shadowy hideouts, Fantasy Flight Games' *Star Wars: Unlimited* tabletop trading card game gives you the power to control the struggle between good and evil!

The game's *Spark of Rebellion* 2-player starter set provides you with two full decks: a Rebel Alliance-inspired pack featuring Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa, Han Solo, and Chewbacca; and an Imperial deck including Darth Vader, Grand Moff Tarkin, Emperor Palpatine, and more. You can learn more about the game on **StarWarsUnlimited.com**, where you can build your deck and locate your local Fantasy Flight Games retailer.

# A Padawan's Path

## This stunning statue captures Ahsoka Tano's Clone Wars journey

During her near-death experience on Seatos, Ahsoka Tano relived moments from her past and confronted the trying days when she served as a Padawan in the Clone Wars. The Hot Toys Ahsoka Tano (Padawan) sixth scale collectible figure, measuring 10.63 inches tall, captures Anakin Skywalker's apprentice as she appeared in *Star Wars: Ahsoka*. It boasts an astonishing array of features, including a head sculpt with separate rolling eyeballs, blue and white striped montrals and lekku embedded with bendable wires, a lightsaber with an LED blade, six interchangeable hands, head accessories in a metallic gold color, and a highly detailed wardrobe. The screen-accurate Ahsoka Tano (Padawan) figure can be acquired on **Sideshow.com** for $255.

# Academy Classics

## Earn your spot on the Jedi team in these valiant varsity jackets

Whether they lived during the High Republic era or the height of the Clone Wars, generations of Jedi were taught the ways of the Force at Coruscant's Jedi Temple. Heroes & Villains is giving you a chance to add *Star Wars* style to your college outfit with these Jedi Knight and Ahsoka Tano Varsity Jackets. Both feature chenille patches, embroidery, and screen print designs. The Jedi Knight version highlights the Jedi Order's symbol, while the Ahsoka Tano variant emphasizes her own familiar patterns. Lined in 100% polyester with faux leather sleeves, the jackets are complete with striped ribbed cuffs, collar, and hem. The Jedi Knight Varsity Jacket and Ahsoka Tano Varsity Jacket can each be purchased separately for $140 on **HeroesVillains.com**.

# DARK SIDE DEALS

**Bag some Bogan bargains with merch inspired by the dark side of the Force!**

## More Machine Now

### This Sith Lord sentry is the bot you're looking for

Towering above his enemies and augmented by technology, Darth Vader struck an imposing figure as he did the Emperor's bidding across the galaxy. Fisher-Price has drawn upon Vader's awesome armor and incorporated plenty of fun twists in its Imaginext *Star Wars* Darth Vader Bot—a most impressive robot toy equipped with a fabric cape, a pop-out disc launcher with six discs, an extendable lightsaber accessory, a Force-inspired projectile ball, a host of lights and iconic breathing sounds, and a 3-inch stormtrooper diecast metal character key. This interactive Darth Vader robot can be added to your toy collection for $149.99.

## A Maul Haul

### Carry your most prized possessions in this Zabrak backpack

When Darth Maul emerged to confront Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi, he symbolically unveiled the looming danger that the resurgent Sith posed to the vaunted Jedi Order. Loungefly's *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* 25th Anniversary Darth Maul Detachable Hood Cosplay Mini Backpack celebrates the film's latest milestone by focusing on Maul's cloaked visage, which glows in the dark as the light fades. The vegan leather bag also has adjustable shoulder straps, a detachable hood, and a 25th anniversary enamel zipper charm. Priced at $80, this Darth Maul Mini Backpack can be bagged on **Loungefly.com**.

## Vader's Visions

### Let the Emperor's apprentice predict your future with flair

The Force granted some the ability to sense how events might unfold, though things did not always proceed how those Force users had foreseen. Hasbro's *Star Wars* Force N' Telling Vader bestows a stylized Darth Vader with a lighthearted form of such power, as the playful electronic figure can answer any "yes" or "no" questions with more than 40 different affirmative, negative, and neutral responses that utilize classic quotes and never-before-heard dialog. You can even elicit snarky responses by rapidly pressing the Sith Lord's head several times in a row. The Force N' Telling Vader's eyes change expressions, with the help of two included AAA batteries, and is exclusively available on **Walmart.com**, priced $19.97.

## Imperial Ear Gear

### Experience the power of these dark-side studs

Darth Vader and his grandson Kylo Ren were each swayed by the dark side of the Force, and they ultimately supplemented their newfound power with the might of the Galactic Empire and First Order. The Power of the Dark Side Stud Set from Girls Crew calls upon unforgettable imagery from these two galactic factions, as Darth Vader, Kylo Ren, a Star Destroyer, and the Death Star are presented in a breathtaking collection of four gunmetal studs. Approximately 7 millimeters wide and outfitted with cubic zirconia stones, these studs are accented by sterling silver posts and butterfly backings. You can pin down your own Power of the Dark Side Stud Set on **ShopGirlsCrew.com** for $68.

# Book Club

The latest *Star Wars* releases take in galactic history through the ages.

## The Force of Creativity!

The complete history of LEGO® *Star Wars* in one bumper volume

**With its first collection of sets launched alongside the theatrical release of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999), LEGO® *Star Wars* has gone on to become a galactic phenomenon all of its own.**

LEGO® *Star Wars: The Force of Creativity* recounts the inside story of the ever-evolving brand, from the creation of its most popular building sets to immersive, real-world experiences, videogames, and animated shows featuring LEGO's unique spin on the galaxy far, far away.

Packaged in a slipcase featuring a LEGO version of the *Millennium Falcon*, this lavish, 312-page coffee table book has an equally impressive Imperial Star Destroyer on its cover. The tome includes a wealth of previously unseen development art, character designs, art prints, and facsimiles, such as a cardstock replica of the rare Toy Fair 1999 invitation box that heralded the arrival of the epic range.

Further delights include a postcard of an early version of the LEGO® *Star Wars* logo, a development sketch for an early print ad, and an exclusive, unproduced animation script.

Featuring interviews with more than 50 insiders at the LEGO Group and Lucasfilm, the book is a treasure trove of fascinating information and trivia, providing an incredible insight into how LEGO *Star Wars* sets and minifigures are conceptualized and translated into items that have become must-haves for children and collectors around the world.

Published by Ameet, the book is on sale July 20, 2024.

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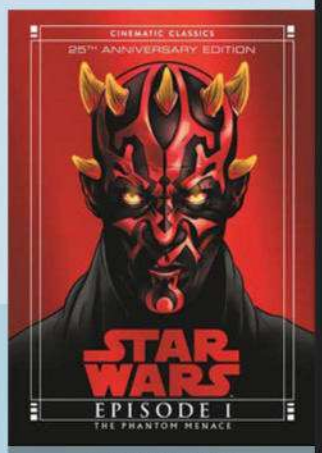


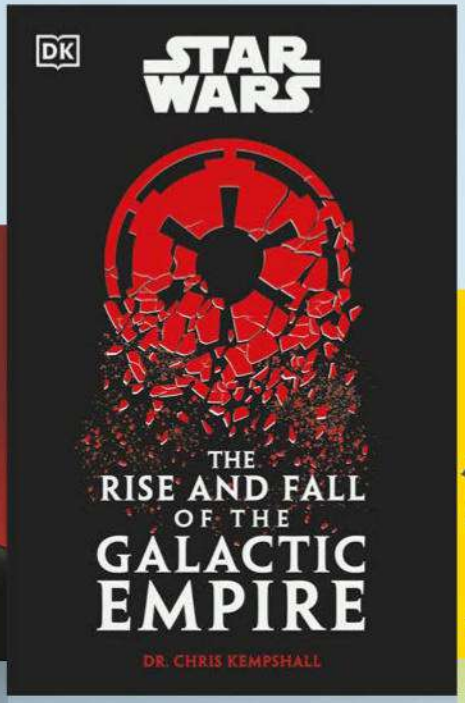


03

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### *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace: Cinematic Classics*

In this innovative repackaging of the 1999 Cinematic Classic, the foundation of the epic Skywalker Saga is retold alongside stunning artwork from the original concept artists employed by Lucasfilm during the development of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*.

This all-ages book marries concept art and narrative true to the film, combining them into a cohesive whole. Each piece of art is accompanied by artist and medium details, offering a glimpse into the inspiration for and the creation of iconic characters and settings, including Darth Maul and the Tatooine scrapyards of Mos Espa. *Cinematic Classics: Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* is the first in an ongoing series published by Studio Press, and is on sale August 1.

02

### *Star Wars: The Rise and Fall of the Galactic Empire*

From the ruthlessness of Darth Vader's campaigns to the horrors of the Tarkin Initiative, author Dr. Chris Kempshall's *Star Wars: The Rise and Fall of the Galactic Empire* from DK Publishing offers fresh insights into the malevolent entity that lay at the core of the original trilogy, in an unprecedented history of the period known as "the dark times."

When the self-appointed Emperor Palpatine declared the inauguration of his new regime, he hoped his new Empire would stand for a thousand years. Instead, it marked the beginning of a new conflict, a rebellion that started small but became unstoppable. This book chronicles how the tyrannical regime rose from the ashes of democracy only to crumble into dust within decades. On sale July 9.

03

### *Weird But True! Star Wars*

From National Geographic Kids comes this collection of 300 epic facts from the galaxy far, far away! In this assemblage of astonishing *Star Wars* insights, fans can uncover the most mind-blowing secrets behind their favorite saga.

Did you know that Jabba the Hutt's slimy movements were scored using a recording of hands stirring a bowl of macaroni and cheese, or that the Corellian hounds in *Solo: A Star Wars Story* were played by dogs wearing prosthetic costumes? The book is bursting with photos and trivia from all three film trilogies, as well as *Star Wars: The Mandalorian* and *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge*. *Weird But True! Star Wars* is on sale August 6.

# Comics Roundup

The Jedi need to watch their backs in this month's *Star Wars* comics

# March of the Inquisitors

The Emperor's minions seek to complete the Jedi purge in *Inquisitors* #1

*The Jedi must die!* The Inquisitors are the living weapons of the Emperor—ruthlessly scouring the Core and the Outer Rim to track down and execute any Jedi who survived the extermination known as Order 66. In fact, many of these Inquisitors were once Jedi themselves, making them among the deadliest threats facing the fugitives who once served the light side of the Force.

*Star Wars: Inquisitors #1*, from writer Rodney Barnes and artist Ramon Rosanas, kicks off a brand-new saga from Marvel Comics. In this limited series, readers will discover the story of Tensu Run, a Jedi who faced the Inquisitors and their master, Darth Vader! What became of Tensu Run, and why did the Empire try to bury the truth of his existence?

The Inquisitors, first introduced on-screen in the animated series *Star Wars Rebels*, have become a key component of the storytelling that bridges the eras connecting the first two *Star Wars* movie trilogies. Thanks to Darth Vader's direct instruction, these initiates gave the Empire a Force-sensitive arm suitable for locating and destroying Jedi survivors across the galaxy, as witnessed in their appearances in videogames, TV series, and beyond.

As the Grand Inquisitor said in the Disney+ hit limited series *Star Wars: Obi-Wan Kenobi*, "The Jedi cannot help who they are. Their compassion leaves a trail." This statement forms the cold heart of *Star Wars: Inquisitors*, which follows the Empire's Jedi hunters as they narrow in on Tensu Run, whose long-term hope is to rebuild the Jedi Order. But Tensu has earned Darth Vader's attention, so the Sith Lord is determined to have him killed, no matter what the cost.

"It's such an honor to be writing the very first Inquisitors solo story!" Barnes told StarWars.com. "I love this time period of *Star Wars* lore, because it's the one I grew up with—when Darth Vader and the Empire were imposing their will on the entire galaxy. Plus, I got to create an all-new legendary Jedi with Tensu Run. Truly the best of times!"

*Star Wars: Inquisitors* #1 features a cover by Nick Bradshaw, with variants by Alex Maleev and the renowned Walt Simonson. On sale July 3.

*(Above) Star Wars: Inquisitors* #1
Alex Maleev Variant

*(Above) Star Wars: Inquisitors* #1
Walt Simonson Variant

## *Star Wars: Ahsoka* #1

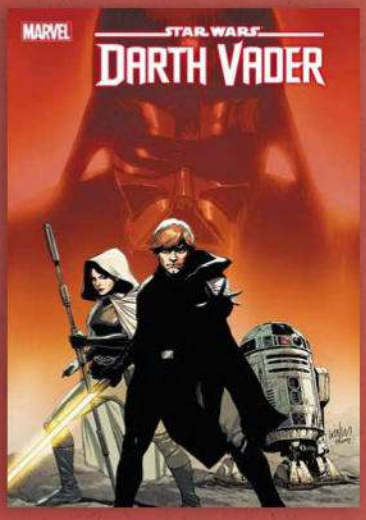
This July, Marvel will release the first part in a miniseries that translates the Disney+ streaming show *Star Wars: Ahsoka* into the comic-book medium. In this 8-issue adaptation by writer Rodney Barnes and artist Steven Cummings, Ahsoka Tano and Sabine Wren venture beyond the galaxy to encounter Grand Admiral Thrawn and the mysterious Force-wielders Baylan Skoll and Shin Hati. Barnes told StarWars.com. "I hope the fans enjoy this adaptation as much as the series it's adapted from." Featuring cover art by David Nakayama and variant covers by Annie Wu, Jan Duuresma, and others, *Ahsoka* #1 is on sale July 10.

## *Star Wars* #48

It's the last chance for Han Solo in *Star Wars* #48, the latest installment of Marvel Comics' flagship series. Featuring the talents of writer Charles Soule and artist Jethro Morales, this adventure kicks off a two-part story focused on Leia Organa, set in the timeframe between *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. The princess has traditionally put the freedom of the galaxy before everything else, including the fate of her captured lover, Han Solo. With the threat of a second Death Star looming over the Rebel Alliance, Leia must decide whether to save Han before it's too late. *Star Wars* #48 is on sale July 17.

## *Darth Vader* #48

The forty-eighth issue of the ongoing Marvel Comics series hits stores on July 24, and the story teaser couldn't be more shocking. Could Luke Skywalker actually join the dark side of the Force, and what would that mean for the Rebellion and the wider galaxy? From writer Greg Pak and artist Raffaele Ienco comes a tale of two Sith: Emperor Palpatine and his apprentice Darth Vader. What if Luke became the Emperor's apprentice, or what if he sided with Vader instead? Sabé, one of Padmé Amidala's former handmaidens, finally tests Luke, as the breakaway faction known as the Schism Imperial reveals its hidden hand!




## Incoming

Don't Miss These Upcoming Releases

### JULY

***Star Wars* Legends: *The Thrawn Trilogy* (Trade Paperback)**
Marvel Comics
**Writers:** Mike Baron, Timothy Zahn
**Artist:** Various
**Cover Artist:** Mathieu Lauffray

***Star Wars* Legends: *Tales of the Jedi* Omnibus (Trade Paperback)**
Marvel Comics
**Writers:** John Ostranmder, Tom Veitch, Kebin J. Anderson and others.
**Artist:** Various
**Cover Artist:** Dave Dorman

***Darth Maul: Black, White & Red* #4**
Marvel Comics
**Writer:** Greg Pak
**Artists:** Luca Pizzari and Will Sliney
**Cover Artist:** E.M. Gist

### AUGUST

***Darth Vader* #49**
Marvel Comics
**Writer:** Greg Pak
**Artist:** Raffaele Ienco
**Cover Artist:** Leinil Francis Yu

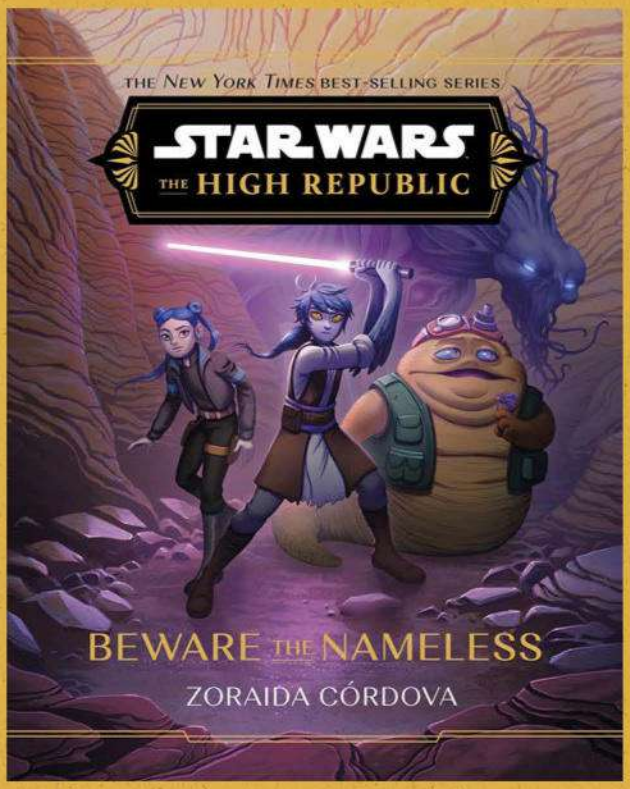
STAR WARS THE HIGH REPUBLIC

# Luminous Lore

Shining a light on *Star Wars: The High Republic.*

# The Monsters are Coming!

Can the next generation of Jedi survive against the sinister Nameless?




## Jedi Beware

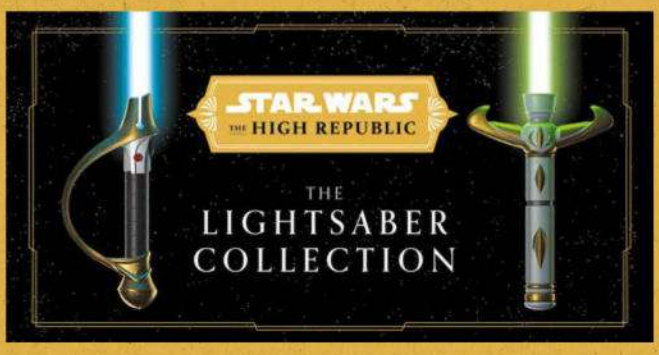
### Tep Tep and Kildo are back

**Continuing the action from *Escape from Valo* by Daniel José Older and Alyssa Wong, *Star Wars: The High Republic: Beware the Nameless* by Zoraida Córdova is the latest middle grade novel in the series.**

More than a year after the destruction of Starlight Beacon, a space station that represented the best of the Republic, the galaxy is enduring one of the most dark and dangerous periods in its history. While the Nihil tighten their grip across entire quadrants, the Nameless pose an ever greater threat to the Order—but there are still hopeful young Jedi-in-training who believe they can help turn the tide of evil in the galaxy. Tep Tep and Kildo (last seen in *Escape from Valo*) return in this exciting new entry into the High Republic saga, joining forces with new heroes Zenny Greylark and Churo the Hutt to stop the monsters that threaten the very existence of the Jedi. Published by Disney Lucasfilm Press, *Beware the Nameless* is on sale August 27.

## Light 'Em Up

### Weapons from a more civilized age




**From Vernestra Rwoh's highly individual lightwhip (recently seen in all its live-action glory in *Star Wars: The Acolyte*) to Stellan Gios' medieval-style crossguard hilt, the elegant weapon of the Jedi Knights has never seen so many new variations as it has during the High Republic era.**

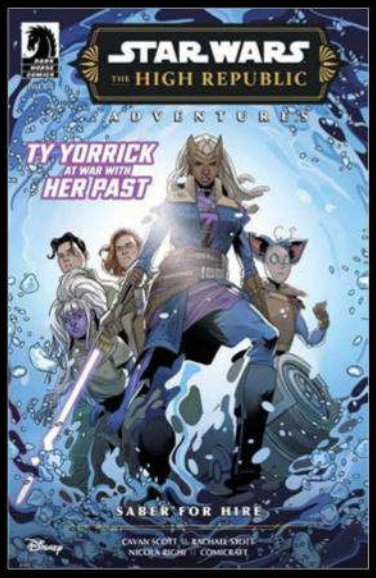
*Star Wars: The High Republic: The Lightsaber Collection* is a follow-up to Insight Editions' previous guide to the lightsabers of the movies and other media, providing a detailed and encyclopedic exploration of the weapons introduced throughout the publishing initiative. It features never-before-seen illustrations of lightsabers from comics and novels, many represented visually for the first time in photo-real, full-color artwork. This must-have resource for fans is on sale September 3, 2024.

# INCOMING COMICS

*The High Republic* comic book releases arriving this July and August!

***The High Republic #9***
Marvel Comics
Writer: Cavan Scott
Artist: Laura Braga
Cover: Phil Noto
On sale: July 3

***The High Republic Adventures #8***
Dark Horse Comics
Writer: Daniel José Older
Artist & Cover: Harvey Tolibao
On sale: July 24




***The High Republic Adventures: Saber for Hire #4***
Dark Horse Comics
Writer: Cavan Scott
Artist & Cover: Rachael Stott
On sale: July 24

***The High Republic: The Edge of Balance Volume 3***
Viz Media
Writers: Shima Shinya and Daniel José Older
Artist & Cover: Mizuki Sakakibara
On sale: August 13

## Republic Roundup

(Excluding Comics & Manga)

### PHASE I

***Light of the Jedi***
**Writer: Charles Soule**
Random House Worlds, Adult novel

***A Test of Courage***
**Writer: Justina Ireland**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Middle Grade novel

***The Great Jedi Rescue***
**Writer: Cavan Scott**
**Artist: Petur Antonsson**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, 8x8 storybook

***Into the Dark***
**Writer: Claudia Gray**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Young Adult novel

***The Rising Storm***
**Writer: Cavan Scott**
Random House Worlds, Adult novel

***Race to Crashpoint Tower***
**Writer: Daniel José Older**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Middle Grade novel

***Out of the Shadows***
**Writer: Justina Ireland**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Young Adult novel

***Tempest Runner***
**Writer: Cavan Scott**
Random House Worlds, Audio original novel

***Showdown at the Fair***
**Writer: George Mann**
**Artist: Petur Antonsson**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, 8x8 storybook

***Mission to Disaster***
**Writer: Justina Ireland**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Middle Grade novel

***The Fallen Star***
**Writer: Claudia Gray**
Random House Worlds, Adult novel

***The Battle for Starlight***
**Writer: George Mann**
**Artist: Petur Antonsson**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, 8x8 storybook

***Midnight Horizon***
**Writer: Daniel José Older**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Young Adult novel

### PHASE II

***Path of Deceit***
**Writers: Justina Ireland and Tessa Gratton**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Young Adult novel

***Quest for the Hidden City***
**Writer: George Mann**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Middle Grade novel

***Convergence***
**Writer: Zoraida Córdova**
Random House Worlds, Adult novel

***The Battle of Jedha***
**Writer: George Mann**
Random House Worlds, Audio original novel

***Cataclysm***
**Writer: Lydia Kang**
Random House Worlds, Adult novel

***Quest for Planet X***
**Writer: Tessa Gratton**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Young Adult novel

### PHASE III

***The Eye of Darkness***
**Writer: George Mann**
Random House Worlds, Adult novel

***Escape from Valo***
**Writers: Daniel José Older and Alyssa Wong**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Young Adult novel

***Defy the Storm***
**Writers: Tessa Gratton and Justina Ireland**
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Young Adult novel

***Temptation of the Force***
**Writer: Tessa Gratton**
Random House Worlds, Adult novel

STAR WARS

THE ACOLYTE

# LESLYE HEADLAND

# ACOLYTE & ARCHITECT

***Star Wars: The Acolyte*** **creator Leslye Headland talks to** ***Insider*** **about bringing** ***The High Republic*** **era to live-action, and the dynamics of good versus evil within the Disney+ series.**

**WORDS:** AREZOU AMIN

***The High Republic*** **makes the jump from publishing to live-action with** ***Star Wars: The Acolyte****, the new Disney+ series from creator Leslye Headland that shows the Jedi Order decades before anyone had heard the name Anakin Skywalker (or Ben "Obi-Wan" Kenobi, for that matter). For Headland, a life-long** ***Star Wars*** **fan, getting the chance to put her spin on the galaxy far, far away was a full-circle moment.**

***Star Wars Insider*****: What was your introduction to** ***Star Wars*****?**

**Leslye Headland:** The original trilogy. I was a kid of the 1980s, so I didn't watch them in the theater. I watched them on VHS and on LaserDisc—all we had back in the dark ages. Absolutely adored each one.

My family moved from Maryland to Connecticut when I was in high school, aged 16, so you can imagine how many friends I had. That coincided with the Special Editions coming out, so I finally got to see

> "I WANTED TO STAY AWAY FROM THE MOVIE ERAS ALTOGETHER WHEN I PITCHED THE SHOW."

the original trilogy in the theater, which was beyond my wildest dreams. That's when I started creating fan-fiction, writing about what I would do in this galaxy, and what I thought was going on. Some of it was informed by Legends stories, some of it was informed by other media, some of it was stuff I made up. I never showed the stories to anyone, they were just something to do as I didn't have any friends.

I was a little too old when the prequels came out, but I really did enjoy them from a filmmaking perspective. George Lucas is probably the only person who could have pushed digital projection forward and forced a lot of major studios and independent filmmakers to embrace shooting on digital, which is how I eventually got my movies made. So, from that standpoint alone, I've always been grateful for them.

As I got older, there wasn't an enormous amount of *Star Wars* media, so I consumed a lot of video essays on the movies, both positive and negative. That was my main *Star Wars* content, and Dave Filoni and George Lucas' *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, obviously, because ▸

at that time it felt like that was the only new *Star Wars* we were ever going to get. That was a really well-made show that I went on a deep journey with. Like everybody else, I fell in love with Ahsoka Tano, and really loved the Nightsisters storyline. Mortis was cool.

Then Disney bought Lucasfilm and started making new films, and I remember my sister Inga called me when *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* came out and said, "Can you believe they're making a *Star Wars* without us?!" I said, "No, I can't, I'm so upset!" [laughs]. Once they started making *Star Wars* for TV, and I'd had a hit TV show with *Russian Doll*, it felt like maybe this would be my chance to contribute to the galaxy as a lifelong fan.

**What was it about the High Republic that made it the right era for *The Acolyte*?**
I wanted to stay away from the movie eras altogether when I pitched the show, so it was an easy choice. I didn't want to step on the Skywalker Saga, didn't want to step on anything. Because I was pitching a brand-new story about the Jedi and the Sith that didn't involve any characters that we already knew, it seemed obvious to me to set them before the prequel trilogy, because the Sith would be the underdogs and the Jedi were the institution. I thought that that dynamic would be very interesting to explore. The Project Luminous publishing initiative was already going on, and Phase I coincided with the timing of my pitch, but I hadn't realized it was a thing yet, so I lucked out in that sense.

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**Do audiences need to some homework before they watch *The Acolyte*?**
Honestly, none. I would even say you don't have to have watched any other *Star Wars* media to enjoy *The Acolyte*. You might need to know what a Jedi is, and that there are characters who have red lightsabers, but I don't think you even need to know that they're called Sith.

But if you're a fan, there are a lot of things that you will recognize, whether they're from *The High Republic* books, like Vernestra Rwoh, or stuff that we've pulled from Legends or from lore that hasn't been used in live-action before. There are definitely a couple of Easter eggs in there that lifelong fans like me will really appreciate. But a viewer who knows nothing about *Star Wars*, nothing about *The High Republic*, will just think, "Oh, that's really cool!"

"THERE ARE DEFINITELY A COUPLE OF EASTER EGGS IN THERE THAT LIFELONG FANS LIKE ME WILL REALLY APPRECIATE."

**What was it about Vernestra Rwoh that made her the character to jump from prose to screen?**
Vernestra felt like a really good way to bridge the gap between this very enlightened, hopeful era, and the prequel era where the Jedi have become enveloped by politics, as Dave Filoni describes it. In the books, Vernestra is a child prodigy. She is celebrated for her youth, for her experience, her power beyond her years, her wisdom beyond her years, but also her bucking against tradition by forging the lightwhip lightsaber. All those things that I think you feel when you're younger, and the world is open to you and anything could happen.

01 *The Acolyte* sees a group of Jedi sent to investigate a series of mysterious crimes.

02 Joonas Suotamo plays Wookiee Jedi Kelnacca.

03

03 Jodie Turner-Smith (left) plays Mother Anisaya in *The Acolyte*.

When we meet up with her in our series, she's more than 100 years old. She still has the same relationship with the Force, if not deeper than when she was younger. And what brought her a knighthood at 15 has now kept her alive for as long as this. That relationship with the Force is a beautiful, important thing. But she's gone from being a young, idealistic prodigy to someone who feels much more high status, definitely politically minded, and a bit dogmatic. That's not to say that she's all the way to the total eclipse of a politically minded Jedi Council moving even into a military existence. I wouldn't say she's there yet. But because of her arc, you can see that the Jedi are moving toward that.

**The series features other Force-attuned characters who fall outside of the Jedi-Sith dichotomy, like Mother Aniseya and her coven. Where did the idea of bringing in people outside of that binary come from?**

I love and really appreciate the Nightsisters, as developed by Filoni under the guidance of Lucas. Whenever I was playing around with this idea, I really wanted to involve witches. I moved from magic into Force manipulation, or engagement with the Force, because it felt to me that would be a slight threat to the Jedi. It's not like a Force cult is something the Jedi haven't encountered before in publishing, like the Path of the Open Hand, but they haven't so much in live-action and animation. So, I wanted to explore that.

There are other people who are in touch with the Force, or use the Force, so what if those people had some sort of hybrid experience of both the Force and witchcraft? How do you parse out which is which? How do you say what one person can do and another person can't do? When it comes to training younglings, as an example, you move into a tricky area. The assumption is that as younglings get older, without training their abilities fade. And my question is, what if they didn't? If there's somebody out there who's being trained as a Sith, do they have to have been a Jedi beforehand? We've definitely seen that before, but when you look at somebody like Savage Opress, that's not someone who started out as a Jedi. Is this world so focused on the morality of good and bad—that good people can use the Force and bad people can't—that they missed the forest for the trees? Are there people who fall in the middle of that? Are there people on the "bad" side who are good? Are there people on the "good" side who are bad?

It feels to me that with all the thousands of Jedi that existed during this period, it would be unlikely that they would all be "perfect," right? The bad guys, they would all be completely bad? Like *snarling* bad? I don't see Asaj Ventress as a total bad guy. I see her starting on one side, ending up somewhere else, and then finding her own path.

04 Amandla Stenberg as Mae.

04

## JEDI ATTIRE

The look of the Jedi Knights in *Star Wars: The Acolyte* owes its inspiration to the robes seen across *The High Republic* publishing initiative on book covers and in comics.

"I like the design of them. They're really beautiful," says Leslye Headland. "[Costume designer] Jennifer Bryan and I talked a lot about distinguishing the costumes of the Jedi from what we called the 'Temple Look,' which are all white and gold, and haven't seen a day of battle, and the 'Mission Robe,' which was the more conventional, dark-brown robes that everyone has embraced by the time of the prequel era. That was another way of bridging the gap between the High Republic and the period of the prequels."

For me, the best example is Ahsoka, and a big inspiration was the Season Five episode of *The Clone Wars*, "The Wrong Jedi." What was so cool was the preservation of her own identity and experience as opposed to blind ▶

05

05 The Temple robes worn by the Jedi on Coruscant were inspired by those depicted in *The High Republic* publishing initiative.

06

devotion to this Order. So, does that make her a bad guy? Of course not.

There are several characters that challenge the norm, and there's one in particular that I relate with the most, because I'm a really angry person [laughs]. A bunch of our characters challenge the conception of "good" and the status quo of everything that I've talked about.

"THERE ARE SEVERAL CHARACTERS THAT CHALLENGE THE NORM, AND THERE'S ONE IN PARTICULAR THAT I RELATE WITH THE MOST."

**What aspects of making the show thrilled your inner fan the most?**

The main thing was the aesthetic of the show. So, utilizing practical sets, practical effects, puppetry, creature creation, shooting on location, building and then scrapping and then rebuilding sets—that all felt like a way to get into the world that was more authentic to me as a fan. It's something that appealed to me about the original films when I was younger, because everything felt so old and tactile in them.

There are lightsaber fights in the show, but the action isn't restricted to swordplay, which was something I also wanted to see, knowing that George Lucas was inspired by the samurai films of Akira Kurosawa. *Star Wars: The Mandalorian* did such a good job of picking up the western references that the original trilogy made. *Star Wars: Andor* was a political spy thriller. I wanted to utilize something that George had done but try to take it all the way in one direction, the way those shows did.

A lot of the stunts were done by First Team, and so much of the fighting is wire work. Carrie-Ann Moss and Lee Jung-jae have been action stars their whole lives, and it was really incredible to see them doing their own stunt work.

**Did your indie filmmaking experience come in handy when it came to making *The Acolyte*?**

Definitely the nuts and bolts of making it. Moving through the world of indie filmmaking and low-budget productions, like *Russian Doll*, oddly prepared me for how difficult it is to get such projects going. When you do that kind of filmmaking with little or no budget, you are pushing up the hill. And then, when you start shooting, you continue pushing up the hill. With a large-budget project like *The Acolyte*, it was hard work to get it going, but once you got there, it was a roller coaster all the way down, and you have no choice but to take the ride. There is no slowing down or stopping at that point.

06 Dafne Keen as Padawan Jecki Lon.

07

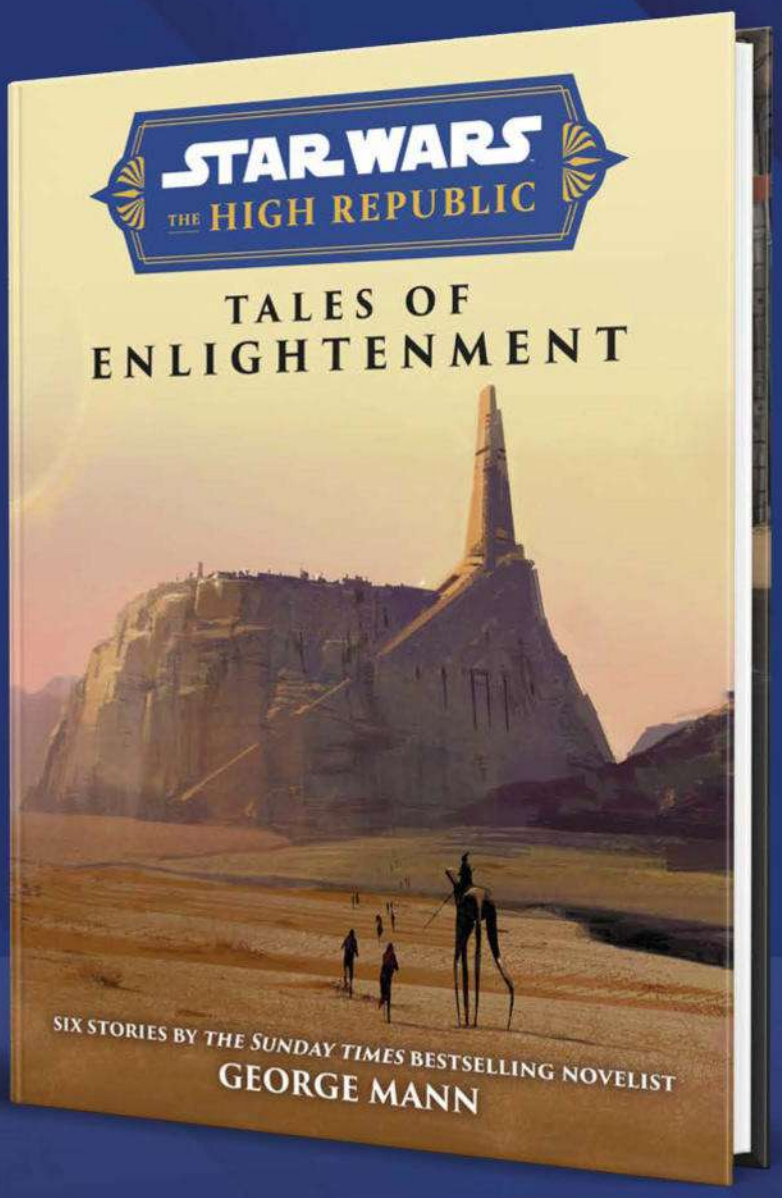
07 Lee Jung-jae as Jedi Master Sol.

## WHAT A JEDI CAN BE

"When you're looking at the Sith versus the Jedi, it's important to show all the different versions of what a Jedi can be," explains Headland. "You need to have somebody like Dafne Keen's character, Jecki Lon, who is very much like Vernestra Rwoh was when she was younger. Jecki isn't a Knight, but she is definitely a very enthusiastic Padawan, ready for anything.

"Then you have Master Sol, played by Lee Jung-jae, who I would say is very much of the Qui-Gon Jinn blueprint, but definitely not at the level of Qui-Gon. Peaceful and stoic. Sol is the type of character who would have been in touch enough with the Force to achieve some of the things Qui-Gon did."

# ORIGINAL STORIES BY THE *SUNDAY TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR GEORGE MANN




Step into Enlightenment, a cantina located in Jedha City, where every patron has a story to tell.

This special edition contains six short tales, including a bonus story exclusive to this collection, as well as a complete guide to the award-winning second phase of *The High Republic*!

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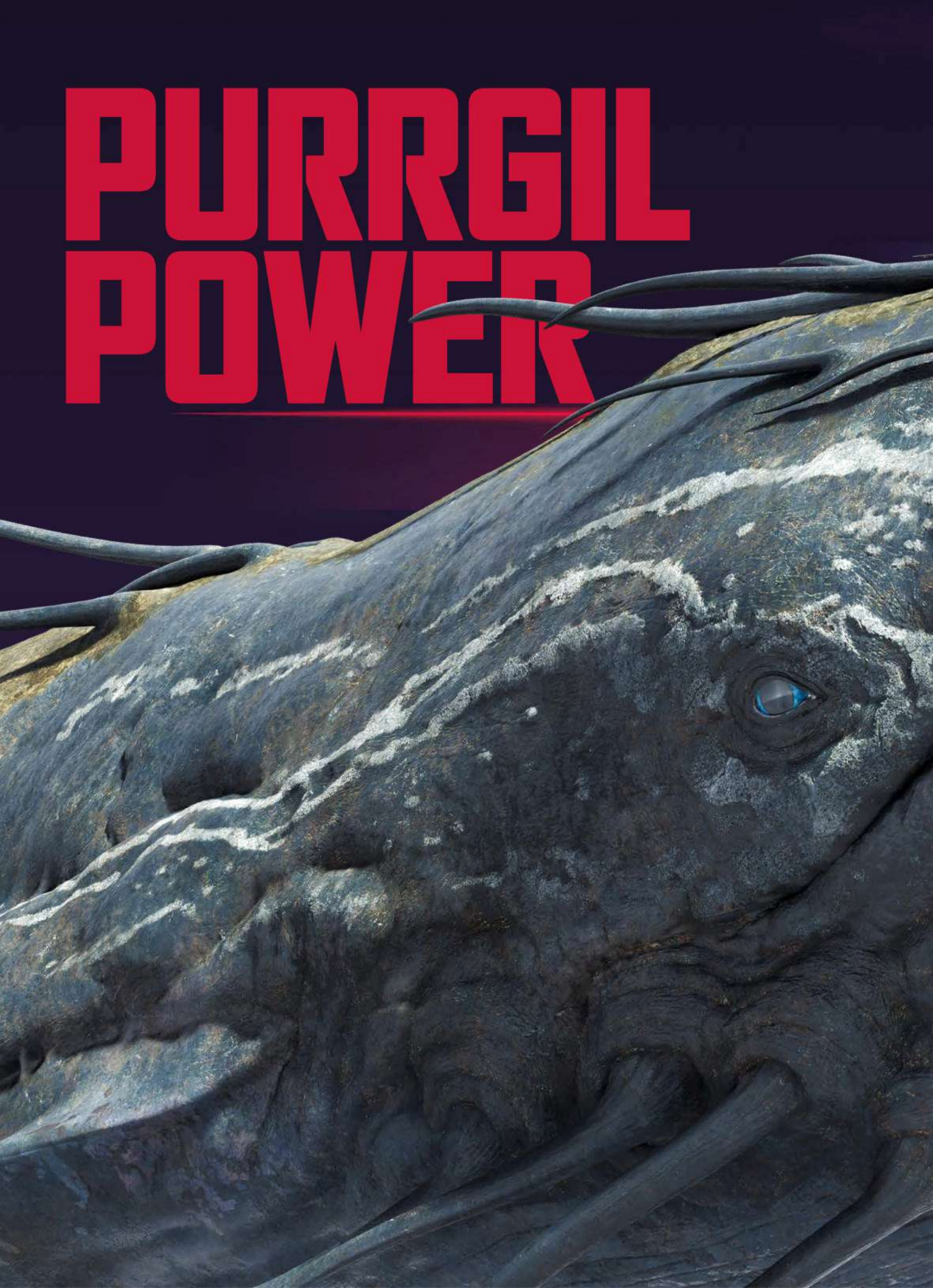
# PURRGIL POWER



**With the help of a *Star Wars*-loving scientist, *Insider* takes a deep dive into purrgil lore to explore what we've learned about the gentle giants and suggest answers to the mysteries that remain.**

**WORDS:** MELISSA T. MILLER

**Giant creatures are a trademark of *Star Wars*, and have had a place in the galaxy far, far away since the very beginning. From the asteroid-dwelling space slug of *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* to Tatooine's krayt dragons, seen in full force in *Star Wars: The Mandalorian*, such behemoths are as big a part of the space fantasy saga as starships and droids.**

We first encountered purrgil in *Star Wars Rebels*, when Ezra Bridger befriended the animated half-squid, half-whale creatures. *Star Wars: Ahsoka* breathed new life into the purrgil, revealing never-before seen details of their adaptations and life cycle. Having been inspired by the enigmatic whales of Earth's oceans, what can our real-world experience tell us about these creatures of fantasy?

"I was so excited when purrgil were introduced in *Rebels*. I love it when *Star Wars* draws inspiration from our world," says Gabriel-Philip Santos, a paleontologist who has studied ancient whales and other marine mammals. "I also think they are very cute. I really like derpy-looking animals," he adds.

Santos, the director of education at the Raymond M. Alf Museum of Paleontology in Claremont, California, is a huge *Star Wars* fan and the co-founder of Cosplay for Science, who loves presenting on scientific subjects at conventions like *Star Wars* Celebration and San Diego Comic-Con. "Anytime you can utilize something from pop culture to get people interested in our world, that's a powerful tool," says Santos. "With Cosplay for Science, we've talked about how cool and beautiful purrgil are, and remind people that they are inspired by real animals. It draws on the imagination and can inspire people."

01

***"When I was young, I was told amazing stories of creatures that lived in the stars, traveled between the worlds. Old pilots said it was the purrgil who inspired us to jump from system to system."***

**Hera Syndulla, *Star Wars Rebels***

01 Paleontologist, Gabriel-Philip Santos.

## PURRGIL ADAPTATIONS

While the differences between the purrgil seen in *Rebels* and *Ahsoka* may simply be due to their depiction in animated and live-action forms, similar variations can be witnessed in real-world whale species. While the *Ghost* crew encountered purrgil that had teeth in *Rebels*, those in *Ahsoka* had something resembling baleen instead. Such facets are present in whales here on Earth and show how different species have evolved from an ancient ancestor along different paths. Toothed whales include sperm whales and orcas, but other species have baleen, which is a comb-like structure made of keratin—the same material as human hair and fingernails. This characteristic tells us something about food sources. Instead of actively hunting for food as toothed whales do, blue whales scoop up huge amounts of water and filter it through their baleen, trapping krill inside their mouth. Perhaps there may have been different species of purrgil traversing the galaxy.

Another trait purrgil had in common with whales was that they grew to a massive size. The blue whale is the largest animal that has ever existed on Earth, an adaptation possible in the low-gravity environment of the ocean. If purrgil evolved in the similarly weightless depths of space, it makes sense that they were able to grow to extraordinary sizes. Those that traveled the vacuum of space grew as large as Star Destroyers, for example.

A further question *Ahsoka* answered about the species was whether the tentacled beings had bones or not. The rings around

02 A purrgil with teeth, as seen in *Star Wars Rebels*.

02

03

03 Purrgil played an active role in the defeat of Grand Admiral Thrawn in *Star Wars Rebels.*

04 Ahsoka Tano's ship entering the mouth of a purrgil.

05 Ezra Bridger communicated with purrgil through the Force.

06 Purrgil concept art from *Rebels.*

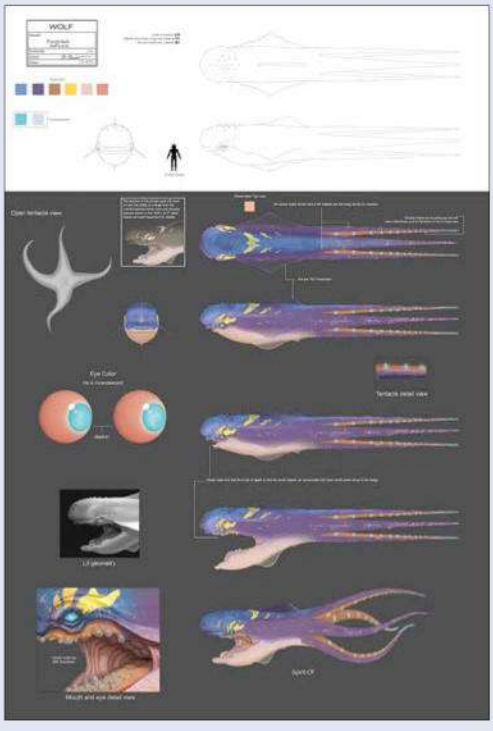
04

05

Peridea, visible as the *Eye of Sion* approached the planet, were in fact an orbiting purrgil graveyard, formed from skulls, ribs, and vertebrae that looked much like whale bones. However, based on their squid-like appendages, their rear-halves could have been composed of cartilage and muscle. "Maybe there was a transition from bone to cartilage somewhere," suggests Santos. "There was probably a structure at the base of their body, where the tentacles started, that allowed the muscles to attach. I don't think they would have that nice fluid motion if there was any bone in the tentacles. There's a limit to how much bones can articulate."

The locomotion of purrgil is somewhat of a mystery as well, but there are clues in the fins that ran along each side of the creatures. Those bore a similarity to the fins of a squid or cuttlefish, used by such animals to propel themselves through water. Rather than utilizing their tentacles, it could be that it was those fins that enabled the purrgil to move through atmospheres and open space alike. "A tentacle is an appendage used for grasping," explains Santos. "Purrgil don't seem to use their tentacles for propulsion, they just kind of flow behind them. But we do see them used to grasp, as they did on Grand Admiral Thrawn's Star Destroyer, the *Chimaera*."

The tentacles did, however, come into play when purrgil traveled at lightspeed. Clouzon-36 gas may not have been their only source of food and energy, but it was clearly linked to the purrgil's ability to enter hyperspace. "They would have needed some physics-defying organ that generated an anti-gravity field, or a stability field that enabled them to travel through atmosphere and also allowed them to propel themselves through space," posits Santos. This hyperspace organ would have metabolized the gas, thus enabling purrgil to travel between the galaxies. ▶



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## HERE (AND THERE) BE MONSTERS

Many of our own legends and fables feature sea monsters that have their roots in whale encounters. The enormity of the creatures and the sheer scale of their ocean home means that mysteries persist about them to this day. It's little wonder that humans throughout history have feared the leviathans that they could not understand. Similarly, the purrgil were the stuff of legend in the *Star Wars* galaxy. Most people, even experienced space travelers, would probably never have laid eyes on one, let alone an entire pod. "The purrgil were considered mythological creatures," agrees Santos, "Even to the Jedi, for whom the legend of Peridea was pretty much a fairy tale."

## PARLEYING WITH PURRGIL

Though we have never heard a purrgil song, their groans and calls do sound similar to whale song here on Earth. A pod of purrgil would have needed to communicate with each other over vast tracts of space, to find mates, to hunt, and to warn each other of danger. Such calls would also have helped them stay together as a group when traveling through the inky depths. "Different groups of baleen whales have their own unique songs. It's their way of identifying each other," says Santos. Some low frequency whale songs may travel as far as 1,000 miles, while other species use high frequency echolocation, sensing objects based on reflected sound. Purrgil may also have used the bioluminescent glow of their tentacles to communicate, relaying signals about navigation just before jumping into hyperspace.

07

07 Purrgil could navigate through hyperspace.

08 Purrgil pods in the atmosphere of Seatos are now an attraction in *Star Tours*.

If these explanations seem overly circumstantial, it's important to understand that even whale biology and habits remain something of a mystery, despite decades of observation. For example, scientists think that some whale species use magnetic fields to navigate on their long migrations, but the mechanism is still not fully understood. Other species are known only from dead individuals washed up on the beach, and have never been studied, or even photographed, alive.

### THE GRAVEYARDS OF PERIDEA

Purrgil returning to Peridea to die is reminiscent of the myth of an elephant graveyard, where old individuals gathered at the end of their lives. "I would do anything to be able to hitch a ride on a purrgil to their graveyard," says Santos, excitedly. "You could learn so much about their biology. As a scientist there are so many questions that I would have loved to try and answer."

In a well-known example from the animal kingdom, many species of salmon die after traveling great distances to spawn in the rivers where they were born. Gray whales also migrate long distances, though not to a different galaxy. Their 10,000-mile roundtrip between the Arctic Ocean and warm Mexican lagoons every year is the longest of any mammal. But other than mass strandings, whales don't die in any single spot. The term "whale fall" is used when a carcass sinks to the seafloor. Animals from miles around are attracted to the scent and a whole community pops up for the feast. Even the bones are devoured. "There are probably some space-faring animals that evolved to feast on this huge bounty of dead purrgil, something like mynocks," thinks Santos. "Since we saw a ton of purrgil bones in *Ahsoka*, it would appear there wasn't an animal that ate those." Instead, the bones became subject to the gravitational field of the planet, and were pulled into orbit, smashing into each other in an endless cycle. Rings of that scale would be made up of untold millions, even billions, of dead purrgil. As Morgan Elsbeth said, the purrgil had followed that path since before time was counted.

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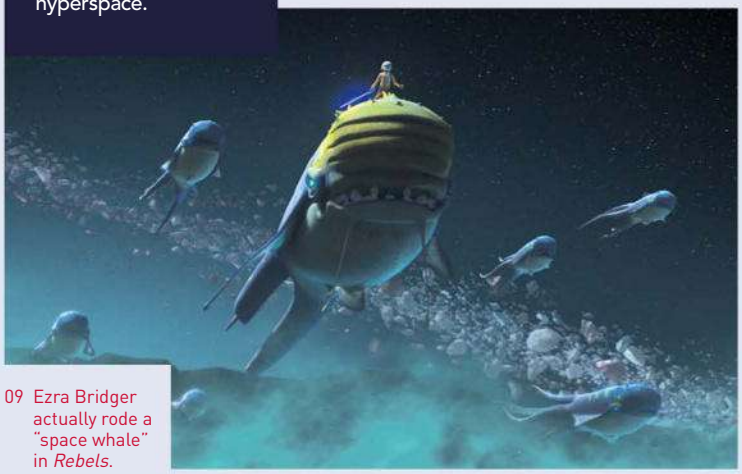


09 Ezra Bridger actually rode a "space whale" in *Rebels*.

09

### PURRGIL RESEARCH

Scientists today use technology like sensors, microphones, and drones to track and learn about

## *"My people were among the first to harness and ride the creatures in the days before time was counted."*

### Morgan Elsbeth, *Star Wars: Ahsoka*

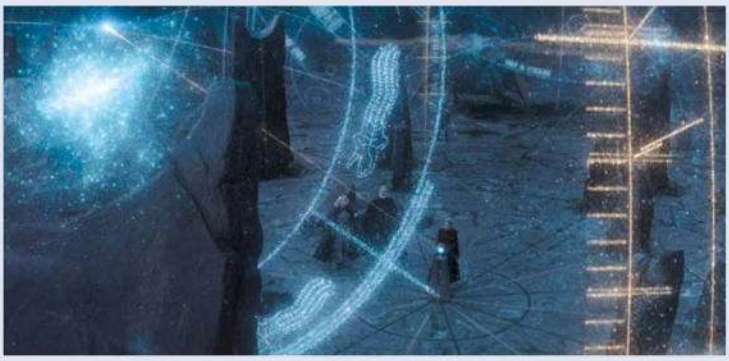
whale populations. *Star Wars* characters interested in learning more about star whales could have programmed probes and communication relays to detect purrgil. The Galactic Society of Creature Enthusiasts, as portrayed in *Star Wars Galaxy of Creatures*, would have been the perfect group to fund such expeditions. As Santos points out, any research the Empire did would most likely have been to harness the hyperspace abilities of the purrgil with a view to enslaving them.

"I would love to have been a researcher and traveled the hyperspace lanes collecting data on the different species of purrgil," he says. "I would have concentrated on the Outer Rim and talked to as many people who knew the legends of the space whales, because those stories would have had some basis in reality."

Marine mammals like whales and dolphins are widely accepted to have cultures that persist in much the same way as ours. Just as we teach math in school, orcas, for example, pass on hunting tricks to members of their pod. Some groups beach themselves in order to grab seals from the shallows while others swim together to create a wave that washes their prey off of icebergs. In South Africa, a small group of orcas kill great white sharks and eat their livers, while along the Iberian Peninsula, orcas attack boats. While it may not seem civilized, these are undoubtedly signs of individual cultures being passed down from one generation to the next.

Santos has a theory about how purrgil similarly mapped the stars. "It is possible there was a lead purrgil per pod, and each of them had different hyperspace lanes that they navigated in space. They remembered which planets had the Clouzon-36 that they needed and passed that knowledge on. As the species spread throughout the galaxy, they would have created new hyperspace routes along with extended families and new cultures."

Purrgil inspired wonder in all those who were lucky enough to behold them. "Seeing something so big compared to us is always awe-inspiring," concludes Santos. "I think that's what keeps people fascinated with whales. It's the same thing with purrgil. They have this grandeur and mystique. There's something there that draws on our appreciation for nature. We have this connection, and I think that's super cool."



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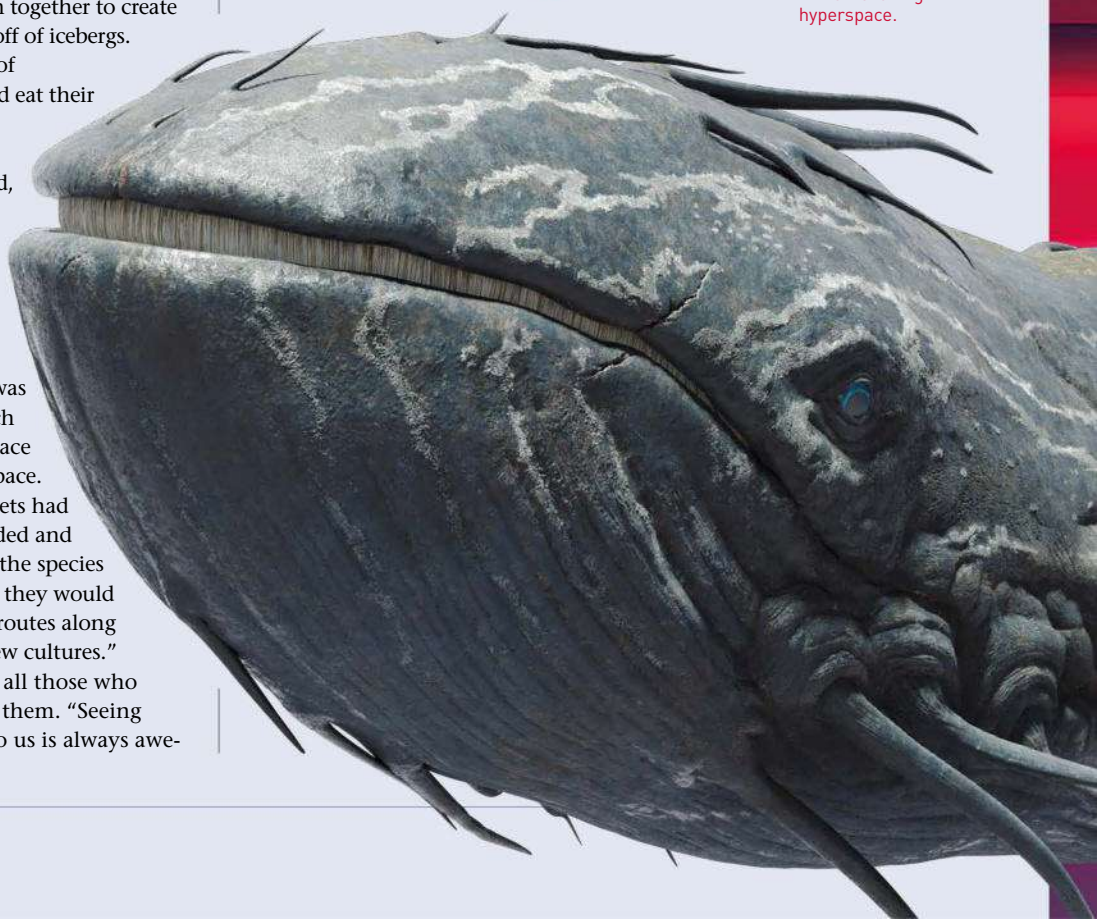
10 Purrgil were represented in an ancient galactic map in *Ahsoka*.

11 Din Djarin and Grogu witnessed shadows of purrgil while travelling in hyperspace.

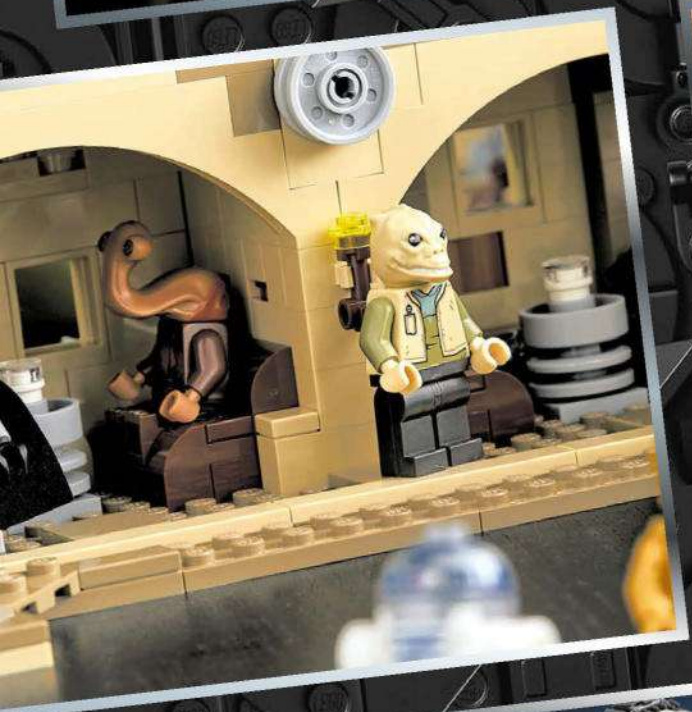


25 YEARS OF LEGO® STAR WARS™

# BUILDING A BRICK EMPIRE

**Launched in 1999 to coincide with the theatrical release of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*, LEGO® *Star Wars* has woven its own saga across the galaxy far, far away. *Insider* explores the 25-year history and future of the range with the help of the LEGO Group's global head of product Mike Ilacqua and design director Jens Kronvold Frederiksen, and Lucasfilm's director of product design for hardlines, Chris Gollaher.**

WORDS: CHRISTOPHER COOPER



**During a LEGO® *Star Wars* panel at *Star Wars* Celebration Anaheim in 2022, Jill Wilfert (senior vice president, entertainment partners and content, the LEGO Group) was asked why the collaboration with Lucasfilm and the *Star Wars* IP was such a perfect fit. "It's inherently the fact that both [brands] are about imagination, and creativity, and inspiring people," she replied, adding, "It's also been amazing to see these two really big, global, iconic brands come together and create something that's truly special and unique."**

That sentiment has been shared across multiple generations, from young *Star Wars* fans who bought into the range when the first *Phantom Menace* sets came out, to kids today building their own Ahsoka Tano's T-6 Jedi Shuttle, and older fans delighting in original trilogy nostalgia with recent anniversary releases such as the 502-piece Boarding the *Tantive IV* set. The LEGO *Star Wars* range has spawned animated spin-off TV series, videogames, and even leisurewear, with its success seemingly as inevitable as that of *Star Wars* itself. But just as the cinematic saga did, let's skip back to the beginnings of the range before talking about where it is today.

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01 The latest Ultimate Collector Series (USC) X-Wing Starfighter (Set 75355).

02 LEGO *Star Wars* has products for all ages, such as the AT-AT Walker (Set 75313).

03 Droideka (Set 75381).

04 Darth Vader's TIE Fighter, (Set 8017).

"When we did the very first launch of LEGO *Star Wars* products, Lucasfilm was releasing the first of the prequel movies," remembers Jens Kronvold Frederiksen, LEGO *Star Wars'* design director at the LEGO Group. "Part of that assortment was related to *The Phantom Menace*. However, we also launched a collection of original-trilogy models at the same time. It's difficult to pinpoint what determined our selection, but we chose to create some of the most iconic ones. For instance, there was an X-Wing and Darth Vader's TIE Advanced building sets."

25 years on and choosing the right themes for sets to celebrate the silver anniversary of the range remained just as important, as Chris Gollaher, Lucasfilm's director of product design for hardlines, explains.

"With so many great film moments and LEGO building sets to draw inspiration from, it was

**"First and foremost, we put the *Star Wars* fan at the center of all ideation."**

**MIKE ILACQUA, GLOBAL HEAD OF PRODUCT, LEGO *STAR WARS*, THE LEGO GROUP**

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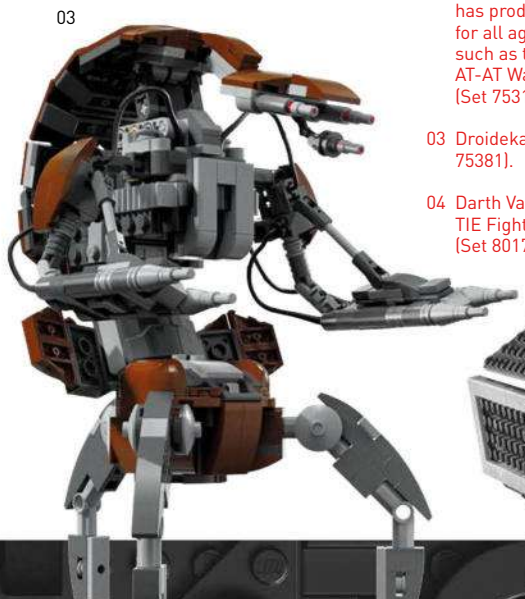

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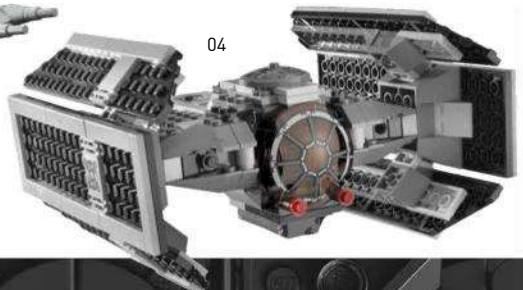

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really difficult to decide what scenes and characters to depict, but ultimately we wanted to celebrate some key milestones that set the foundation for an amazing 25-year partnership," he says. "When ideating on what to include in the anniversary line, we wanted to add innovation in design and builds while also including the fun surprises that we've come to know and love from LEGO *Star Wars*, including new scales, new display formats, and new construction experiences. Given that we're celebrating the 25th anniversary of *The Phantom Menace*, it also seemed a great time to add an extra helping of prequel fun!"

05 The UCS *Millennium Falcon* (Set 75192) has 7,541 pieces.

## BRICK TO BASICS

The inspiration behind each new set is, to an extent, an organic and ongoing conversation between creatives at Lucasfilm and the LEGO Group team. Whether a new live-action series, movie, or animated story is upcoming, future sets are decided upon by taking many considerations onboard.

**"Ultimately we wanted to celebrate some key milestones."**

**CHRIS GOLLAHER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCT DESIGN FOR HARDLINES, LUCASFILM**

"We're closely connected," agrees Frederiksen. "Especially in the phase where we are discussing a new assortment, whether those are brand-new ideas for products or are ideas that are related to new content. We brainstorm and generate concepts together, but we also have designers from other ▶

06 *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*-themed BrickHeadz.

06

## MARVELOUS MINIFIGURES

**A collectible in their own right, Jens Kronvold Frederiksen and Chris Gollaher explain how a simple LEGO minifigure template can be imbued with many different personalities through decoration and accessories.**

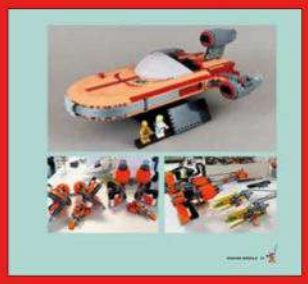
"Our designers do an amazing job of translating *Star Wars* characters into a distinctly LEGO minifigure form," says Gollaher. "While there are clear guidelines on what can and cannot be done with a minifigure, the amount of variety we can achieve is incredible, and the LEGO *Star Wars* team are experts at doing that. With innovations in print processes, co-molding (where the injection molding process creates plastic parts in two colors), and other advancements, the level of detail that can be included now is stunning. We continue to look for new ways to capture the essence of our favorite characters, and I think that's what makes the minifigures so enjoyable—essentially we have a standard template, but with the right graphics and expressions, you know straight away not only who a character is, but often which signature moment of a story they represent."

"*Star Wars* has actually played a big part in the development of the minifigure," adds Frederiksen. "Before LEGO *Star Wars*, there were no sculpted heads; they didn't exist until we did Jar Jar Binks for the very first range in 1999. We're always trying to improve upon what has been done before, so a Darth Vader minifigure from 1999 is very different from the version that we launched in our current sets."

## THE BOOK OF BRICKS

Fans of LEGO *Star Wars* who are keen to learn more about the origins of the collaboration between the LEGO Group and Lucasfilm, should look out for LEGO *Star Wars: The Force of Creativity*, a large-format, hardcover coffee-table book from Ameet, released on July 20, 2024.

The most extensive archive of LEGO *Star Wars* ever published, the book takes a behind-the-scenes look at the model design process and how the franchise grew its fandom through videogames and animated content, with extensive interviews and previously unseen material that will delight readers.



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07 The 1,073-piece The Child (Set 75318) is now retired.

08 Boba Fett's Starship Microfighter (Set 75344).

parts of the organization who are passionate about *Star Wars* that sometimes bring us totally new ideas we hadn't thought of within the LEGO® *Star Wars* team."

"For an individual building set, we know the planned timing for the release, so we know what story content will be important, whether a set is from a new series, a new movie, or a key anniversary that is meaningful to fans, and we'll plan the releases around those," explains Gollaher. "We'll also discuss the target audience we're thinking about—is this a building set for an experienced builder or a younger fan? That will inform how we think about the elements and the build. For sets based on new content, the Lucasfilm team will provide insight, suggestions, and reference on important new ships, characters, and story points. LEGO set designers will then refer to this material when designing an initial sketch model and creating any new elements. We have weekly calls where we review initial builds and features, discuss which minifigures will make the most sense, brainstorm new features, and expand the product story we're trying to tell. Basically, we discuss every aspect of the sets from concept through to production to make sure we're putting out the best sets that bring the *Star Wars* saga to life in the most accurate and enjoyable way we can."

Mike Ilacqua, the LEGO Group's global head of product behind the LEGO *Star Wars* range, points out that whatever they do, it is the range's target audience that ultimately guides their decision-making process. "First and foremost, we put the *Star Wars* fan at the center

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of all ideation, from the youngest Padawans to the most experienced master builders. We constantly look back to see which products have resonated with fans, which haven't, and through the lens of upcoming studio content or anniversary celebrations. But the best ideas usually come from our talented model designers, who are so passionate about their craft and delighting our fans with new concepts and the latest building techniques to push the boundaries of what's possible with LEGO bricks."

## BUILDING ON AN IDEA

Founded in 1932 by a carpenter named Ole Kirk Christiansen, the company adopted the LEGO name in 1936, but it wasn't until 1946 that Christiansen invested in an injection molding machine to modernize his toymaking. The familiar interlocking building bricks followed in 1949 and soon gained global popularity. While the basic LEGO brick has remained essentially unchanged since then, the design process has kept pace with new technologies.

"Almost all LEGO model designs today are done digitally," says Frederiksen. "It's the fastest and easiest way to design a model. However, early in the process we do build them physically using LEGO bricks. There are several reasons why this is important. Firstly, because we are creating a physical product, and secondly, there are many things we cannot assess on a digital model, like its stability and whether the play features and functions work. An important part of our model development is also testing them with kids, which of course we need a physical model for."

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Despite retaining the classic LEGO brick connectivity, sets now include more intricate pieces and there are ever more complex building techniques being employed.

"We have a lot of new elements and bricks now which means we're capable of creating more detailed, accurate models, and that's specifically something that's visible when we look at our adult ▶

09 Mos Espa Podrace Diorama (Set 75380).

10 The UCS TIE Interceptor (Set 75382).

11 Inside the Mos Eisley Cantina (Set 75290).

**"There should be something for everybody in the LEGO *Star Wars* range."**

**JENS KRONVOLD FREDERIKSEN, DESIGN DIRECTOR, LEGO *STAR WARS*, THE LEGO GROUP**

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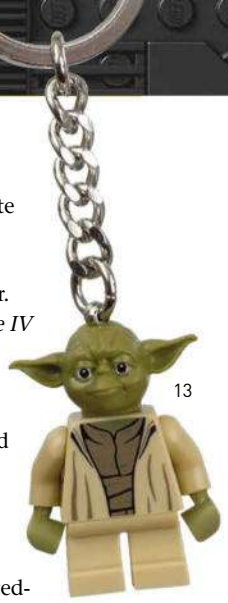

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products," Frederiksen explains. "However, we have products for ages 4+ and upwards, and we are always very focused on creating the best building experience for specific age groups. We have relatively simple builds, and ones that are more suited for play. They might not be as detailed as, for instance, our adult models, but they will be sturdier if a kid wants to fly a starship around the room. It's important that the building experience is good for all ages. There should be something for everybody in the LEGO® *Star Wars* range."

## JEDI LEGO MASTERS

Ilacqua is keen to pay tribute to the ongoing collaboration between the LEGO Group and Lucasfilm, and how Frederiksen, Gollaher, and their colleagues have pushed the boundaries of what can be done with the two brands.

"So many people have worked across LEGO *Star Wars* throughout the years, so it's hard to call out specific individuals without forgetting anyone," Ilacqua says. "I would say, though, that it is hard to imagine LEGO *Star Wars* products without acknowledging the more than 25-year collaboration between Jens and Chris. They have been a constant creative force in an ever-expanding galaxy. The special relationship between the LEGO Group and Lucasfilm really is a testament to our dedicated teams and the passion and respect they have for the franchise and our fan community."

Frederiksen and Gollaher have personal favorites from the vast number of sets they have worked on, but unsurprisingly neither can settle on a particular one.

"There are so many different products. How do you even pick a favorite?" Frederiksen balks at the idea. "One very special set was, of course, the Death Star (75159). That was such a big, impressive, and complex build. It was something that brought families together. Often parents built the model with their kids. It was an interesting build because it included many minifigures, and offered endless opportunities for role play and fun when completed. A few other models I must bring up are the Ultimate Collector Series *Millennium Falcon* and X-Wing building sets. We have done ships many times but those are some of the strongest. Regarding minifigures, it's also a tough call what my favorite would be, but I think it's hard to talk about LEGO *Star Wars* minifigures without talking about Darth Vader and Yoda. Yoda is probably my favorite character of them all."

**"The themes raised by the anniversary line are really our blueprint for future lines."**

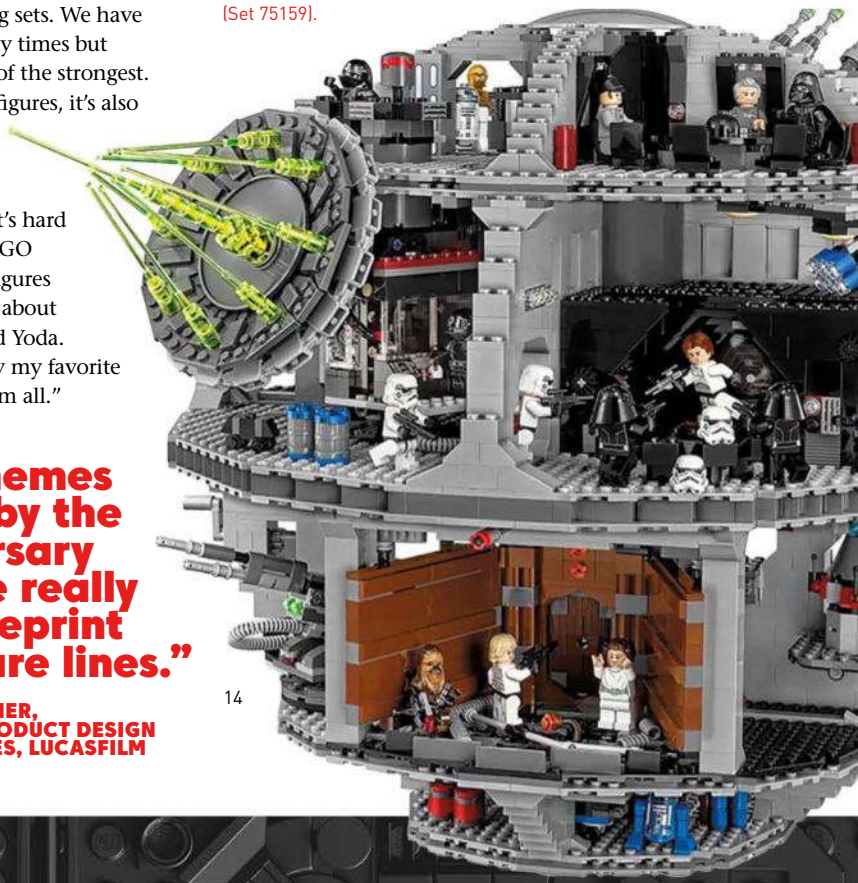
**CHRIS GOLLAHER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCT DESIGN FOR HARDLINES, LUCASFILM**

"One of my favorite building sets is from the 25th anniversary line," reveals Gollaher. "Boarding the *Tantive IV* (75387), is one of the most memorable, signature scenes from the film that launched the *Star Wars* saga, and having captured it in LEGO set form with all these great details, from the blasted-open doors to the way we found to show Darth Vader's Force abilities, demonstrates how we can reimagine these great moments in fun, new ways. I also think the exclusive minifigures showcase this anniversary well. They really illustrate that even though we have 25 years of amazing LEGO *Star Wars* products, there are still new characters and building sets to discover. The themes raised by the anniversary line are really our blueprint for future lines—we want to celebrate the core stories of the brand while continuing to innovate with new entertainment and creative new builds."

12 Boarding the *Tantive IV* (Set 75387).

13 The Force is your ally with a Yoda LEGO *Star Wars* minifigure keychain.

14 The mighty Death Star (Set 75159).



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# *Star Wars* Stackables!

Innovative *Star Wars* drinkware from JoyJolt to be won!

**There are numerous beverages that suit every palate in the *Star Wars* galaxy, from Alderaan Twists to hearty draughts of spotchka, and the healthy taste of (extremely fresh) thala-siren milk. But only in our galaxy can you sip your favorite drink from character-themed *Star Wars* Stackable Glasses from JoyJolt—and we've got two sets to give away!**

Each of these innovative sets is comprised of two stunningly designed glasses with a retro feel, one that fits neatly on top of the other to create a cute portrait of familiar *Star Wars* characters. Made from tough, lead-free Borosilicate Glass, there are five different designs in the range, which includes adorable renditions of the infamous bounty hunter Boba Fett, Din Djarin (AKA the Mandalorian), Grogu (with ears as handles), "Sip" Lord Darth Vader, and the opaque white Imperial stormtrooper. Each individual glass has the capacity to hold 10.3 fluid ounces, and the thermal resistance of the glass makes them suitable for use with hot or cold drinks.

To be in with a chance of winning a set of *Star Wars* Stackable Glasses, just send us the correct answer to this *Star Wars* trivia question:

**What color is the milk produced by female banthas?**

A. Green
B. Heliotrope
C. Blue

Send your answer via email to **insidercomp@titanemail.com** or our usual postal address (see 'Contact Us' on page 3), marked "STACKABLES!" by September 20, 2024. Terms and conditions are available at titanmagazines.com

**May the Force be with you!**

**www.joyjolt.com**

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# AMANDA LAWRENCE
## A COMMANDING PERFORMANCE

**As Commander Larma D'Acy, Amanda Lawrence was involved in some of the most dramatic and poignant scenes in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* and *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*.**

WORDS: MARK NEWBOLD

**Noted theater actor Amanda Lawrence studied drama at the U.K.'s renowned Bretton Hall College and has been a regular face on British television for the past two decades. Her role in the final two films of the Skywalker Saga brought her to the attention of *Star Wars* fans around the globe. *Insider* spoke with Lawrence about playing Commander D'Acy, and acting opposite the legendary Carrie Fisher (General Leia Organa).**

***Star Wars Insider*: The saga had already returned to the big screen in 2015 with *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. How did you land your role in *The Last Jedi*?**

**Amanda Lawrence:** I was performing at the Globe Theatre in London in the comedy Nell Gwynn, playing Nancy, and Rian Johnson (director of *The Last Jedi*) happened to be in the audience during one of the shows. A couple of weeks later my agent called me on the phone and told me he had asked if I wanted to do a couple of days on the movie. At the time I had a three-year old son, and my partner is a massive *Star Wars* fan, so I said "I'd be honored, thank you very much!" And I did it. My agent said that it probably wouldn't be a speaking role, and that I'd just be on set for a couple of days, but when I got there, Rian had written some dialogue for Commander D'Acy.

**What did you make of the character you'd been given?**

I was really pleased with the lines Rian had written for me. I really liked her. With any role, you're given your dialog, and you create your character around them, but the lines themselves dictate a certain way of being, and D'Acy was solid, she was steady, but she had to be. A lot of water had passed under the bridge, and she'd been through a lot.

That is something that I love about many of the characters in *Star Wars*. It's so clever that often we meet them midway through their story. That's something awesome I remember about seeing *Star Wars: A New Hope* for the first time, when that huge scroll of text told us where we were at in this story. That was so brave, to start a film by telling the audience all of this has already happened. Human beings are basically storytellers, that's what we inherently are—we tell stories, and *Star Wars* characters have this kind of storytelling weight as well. Stuff has happened to them already. That was genius, and I think you get that with Commander D'Acy.

**"D'ACY WAS SOLID, SHE WAS STEADY, BUT SHE HAD TO BE. A LOT OF WATER HAD PASSED UNDER THE BRIDGE, AND SHE'D BEEN THROUGH A LOT."**

01 Amanda Lawrence as Commander Larma D'Acy.

02

02 D'Acy (Lawrence, center) with Vice Admiral Amilyn Holdo (Laura Dern, left) in *The Last Jedi*.

**You mentioned your partner is a huge fan of the films. Was that common ground for you both?**
I was born in 1971, and I've got three brothers, two of whom are older than me, and I remember seeing the first film as a family clan. I was more into *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) and *Bambi* (1942) at the time, so I wasn't a massive *Star Wars* fan. When my dad eventually bought our first video recorder, a Betamax, he also purchased the original trilogy—we only had six video tapes, and three of them were *Star Wars*. We watched them back-to-back, all the time, on a loop. We weren't obsessed with it, but we did love it, and that's when it became ingrained in my psyche. I think for many people growing up at that time, it really got into our DNA. The fundamentals of *Star Wars* are good struggling against evil, and that dichotomy exists within us as people. I think that's kind of genius, and it sticks; it roots very deeply into our brains. Very clever stuff.

**Was there a character from those early films that really grabbed you?**
Princess Leia Oorgana. Because, you know, it's *Princess Leia*! She was the strong female figure, even though I wasn't aware of the importance of that as a little girl. I was drawn to her because she was beautiful, and she had all this hair on either side of her head. It was probably hair pieces, but we just thought that was her own hair. And she could talk back to the heroes and the 'anti-heroes'; she gave as good as she got. She was powerful and witty and savvy without being angry. Leia was quite an influence for young girls to watch, and for young boys too.

**Having been a fan as a kid, how did it feel arriving on set for *The Last Jedi* and *The Rise of Skywalker*?**
There was a clunkiness to all the switches and the nodules that I recognized immediately when

03 Lawrence returned to the role of D'Acy in *The Rise of Skywalker*.

**"AT ONE POINT, ON THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON*, I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, 'OH... MY...GOD. THIS IS NUTS, THIS IS ABSOLUTELY *NUTS*!'"**

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I walked onto those sets. The craftsmanship that went into both films was so impressive. I'm mainly used to doing theatre, so to walk onto a movie set that was absolutely massive and had a huge amount of people employed on it, was slightly daunting for me. It was just vast, but then I started talking to people and there were so many of them who had worked in the theatre and done other films and suddenly it became intimate again.

Rian was very approachable, as was J.J. Abrams on *The Rise of Skywalker*. They are both kind, strong, creative souls. They're passionate filmmakers who love to write stories. Good, good, people, and that permeated throughout the set. I soon realized that it wasn't such a scary place to be because everyone there was trying to make their stories work.

04 Lawrence felt honored to be part of scenes that piad tribute to the late Carrie Fisher.

05 Commander D'Acy in *The Last Jedi*.

05

**"THERE WAS A DIFFERENCE IN THE AIR, A SENSE OF GRIEF AND A SADNESS BECAUSE CARRIE FISHER WASN'T THERE."**

**Did you allow yourself a moment of giddiness about what you were involved with?**

I did. At one point, on the *Millennium Falcon*, I thought to myself, "Oh…my…God. This is nuts, this is absolutely *nuts*!" I ended up doing a lot more than two days in the end, and that feeling kept coming back and hitting me in waves, but I gradually got used to it. Eventually, my only concern was, "I hope I'm doing alright." But that's just, you know, basic actors' anxiety.

There was a Family Day on set, so I bought my partner and our son along, and my partner said, "I think I'm going to cry!" I said, "Please don't do that," but he found it truly emotional because *Star Wars* means a lot to him, right back to when he was little, and he's invested in this galaxy and its characters.

**How did it feel going back to shoot *The Rise of Skywalker*, knowing it was the final chapter of the original saga?**

There was a difference in the air, a sense of grief and a sadness because Carrie Fisher wasn't there. I was filming scenes about Leia passing, and it was difficult to be telling that story, to be honest. I felt very honored to be a part of those scenes. But we were making a film and there was lots of other storytelling that had to be done, so there wasn't pressure from that so much as the need to keep moving on.

D'Acy isn't a main character, so I would come in for a few days, here and there, and walk into

## INSIDER INTEL

**As a young girl, Princess Leia was the *Star Wars* character who captured Amanda Lawrence's imagination. Decades later, while filming *The Last Jedi*, the actor found herself performing against screen legend Carrie Fisher.** "Carrie was a wonderful woman. Very kind, very intelligent. Just lovely," Lawrence says about the experience. "There are so many words to describe her. She was a beautiful person, awake and wise, and very honest, which are traits she gave to Leia completely. Myself and my friend Priyanga Burford, who played the medic on *The Last Jedi*, say what an honor it was and how lucky we were to have those moments with her."

## INSIDER INTEL

### COMMANDER LARMA D'ACY

Born on the planet Warlnetta, Larma D'Acy joined the Resistance at the request of General Leia Organa and was stationed aboard the star cruiser *Raddus* during the evacuation of D'Qar. She was one of the few survivors who made it to Crait, where she was instrumental in mounting a final defense against the forces of the First Order.

Later, she took a command role in the Battle of Exegol that saw people from across the galaxy come together to defeat the Final Order and the resurgent Emperor Palpatine.

something that was already very much up and running. We had a few new actors around us, but many of the same people from *The Last Jedi* were there, and it was lovely seeing everyone again, holding cups of tea and chatting.

**Your kiss at the end of *The Rise of Skywalker* was a special moment that added a subtle new layer to your character, while encompassing the sense of victory and relief inherent in the movie's finale. Had you been expecting it to be so profound?**
I'd met with J.J. just before we were about to start shooting, and he asked if I would be up for doing the scene, and I said, "Absolutely! I'd be honored. Thank you for asking me." I was kind of thrilled. Vinette Robinson, who played pilot Wrobie Tyce, my partner in the film, is a wonderful actor, so I felt very privileged to be playing the scene with her. We both thought it was brilliant, and it felt important to do.

01 Lawrence describes performing D'Acy's emotional kiss with pilot Wrobie Tyce (Vinette Robinson) as a "privilege."

**"WE BOTH THOUGHT IT WAS BRILLIANT, AND IT FELT SO IMPORTANT TO DO."**

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# ART WARS

**Traditional art is an important aspect of the visual language of *Star Wars*, from abstract patterns on the walls of ancient structures to family keepsakes. *Insider* casts a critical eye over the meanings behind such galactic art, and the real-world forms that echo it.**

**WORDS:** HARVEY HAMER

WITH THANKS TO DOCTOR GEORGE NASH.

**The *Star Wars* galaxy is home to an enormous number of sentient species, each with their own cultures, sects, history, and art. Grand Admiral Thrawn made a career out of understanding the art of multiple civilizations, and what it told him about their strengths and weaknesses. *Insider* called upon its own Thrawn-style expert to explore the commonalities between the likes of Twi'lek Kalikori and murals on the walls of ancient Jedi temples, and similar ancient traditions of creativity on Earth.**

When drafting and redrafting what would become *Star Wars: A New Hope*, George Lucas read many books on comparative mythology and channeled his own interest in anthropology and archaeology in his attempts to build the history, mythology and religions of his space-fantasy story.

"Lucas drew upon the imagery of the ancients," explains Doctor George Nash, a research fellow at the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Bristol, U.K. "This fragmentary pictorial discourse, taken from both archaeological and ethnographic sources, allowed him to establish a viable context which has been maintained throughout the fictional *Star Wars* galaxy."

Ever since Lucas first created his playground and the Force-wielders and other striking beings who would inhabit it, many creatives have added more colors to the *Star Wars* tapestry, with murals and artifacts inspired by the equally varied cultures that have blossomed on our planet since the first artists made marks on cave walls using iron oxide-rich pigmentation. ►

01 A depiction of the Father, the Daughter, and the Son, painted on the wall of an ancient Jedi temple on Lothal.

***"LUCAS DREW UPON THE IMAGERY OF THE ANCIENTS."***

## VISIONARY ART

"The hand stencil and handprint are probably our earliest pictorial forms that were also produced by our Neanderthal cousins," Nash tells us. "In southwestern Europe, hand stencils found in several caves have been securely dated to around 65,000 years ago." He goes on to ask: "Who made these signs? Early modern humans or Neanderthals, and why? Were such signatures representing the 'self,' the elites, or the community?"

The second season of *Star Wars: Visions* presented us with the galactic equivalent of these primitive artworks, albeit with a Force-fueled twist. "In the Stars" saw sisters Tichina and Koten remembering their mother and other ancestors at a monument they referred to as "Mom's stone," a wall of painted negative handprints—much like the images common to many prehistoric sites around the Earth.

Negative handprints, made by spraying paint around one's hand as it is pressed against the rock surface, are seen nowhere more spectacularly than the Cueva de las Manos, (Cave of the Hands) in Argentina. It's a substantial collage of handprints surrounding a cave entrance, like wildfire flames of generations adding to the legacy, created over thousands of years.

Just like our ancient ancestors, the characters of "In the Stars" passed down the tradition of their art and culture. "Mum used to do it like this," Tichina told her sister in the episode, as she mixed paint to blow onto the rock wall. In the *Visions* short, however, the paint glowed with a magical golden light and the images sprang into life. Perhaps our ancestors also saw movement upon the walls of their painted caves, given life by the flickering flames of burning torches?

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02 Cueva de las Manos, (Cave of the Hands) in Argentina.

03 Glowing hands on "Mom's stone," in the *Star Wars: Visions* episode "In the Stars."

04 Another magical image from "Into the Stars."

05 Hera Syndulla inspects her family Kalikori.

*Star Wars* is no stranger to mystical caves. From Luke Skywalker's vision of a clash with Darth Vader in the dark-side cave of Dagobah, all the way through to Rey's mirror cave experience in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, the idea of divining the future through visions has been a part of the galaxy far, far away. It may have been there since the beginning of our own representational art too.

"One cannot dismiss the concept that over 400 centuries separate the artists of the Upper Paleolithic with the present," says Nash. "Much of what we think went on in terms of artistic endeavor is now only one of many plausible interpretations. Alas, we have no direct link between us and them!"

There are theories that painted caves may have been places of education or initiation, in some ways like a Jedi temple. Others believe that artwork of animals on cave walls was a sort of hunting magic, images from shamanistic dreams and hopes for the future made real. From a certain point of view, both might be true.

## TWI'LEK TOTEMS

In Twi'lek culture, Kalikori were segmented totems passed down from generation to generation,

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**"MUCH OF WHAT WE THINK WENT ON IN TERMS OF ARTISTIC ENDEAVOR IS NOW ONLY ONE OF MANY PLAUSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS."**

each family member inscribing or painting a new addition to the growing object of legacy. In *Star Wars Rebels* we saw the importance, and representational nature of each shape, to the current owner of the Syndulla family's Kalikori. Hera was devastated when it was taken away from them.

According to Henry Gilroy, co-executive producer of *Rebels*, Kalikori were inspired by "the idea of a heritage quilt, where each generation of a family will add a new square to it, yet it's all there for everyone to look back on the past and get a sense of the personality of their ancestors."

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Many similar heirlooms are found in cultures across the world—for tens if not hundreds of thousands of years, people have been making small, portable objects, inscribed with meaning.

"The indigenous communities of Northern Australia, for example, provide a direct link between early modern humans leaving southern Africa and 'modernizing' the globe," says Nash. "Their complex ceremonies that include artistic endeavor are the embodiment of who we are today."

More examples found in *Star Wars* include the wooden japor snippet pendant Anakin Skywalker carved for Padmé Amidala, or the kern-nut necklaces and totemic effigies of the Aki-Aki of Pasaana, burned in the symbolic ancestor-portal bonfires of their festivals.

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06 An ancient frieze of the Great Sith War that hung as a wall decoration in Supreme Chancellor Palpatine's offices.

07 The japor pendant gifted by Anakin Skywalker to Padmé Amidala.

08 Amidala treasured the pendant throughout her life.

09 The Aki-Aki of Pasaana used art in their rituals.

## NOT A STORY THE JEDI WOULD TELL YOU

Six stone panels displayed on a wall in Supreme Chancellor Palpatine's office suite depicted lightsaber-wielding warriors and mythic beasts in the form of a bas-relief. Found during an archaeological dig in a Massassi temple on Yavin 4, this frieze of the Great Sith War held great value to Palpatine. Had it been painted like some bas-reliefs on Earth are, it may have hinted at his true allegiances.

Using stone to create three-dimensional images goes back to that earliest cave art, where natural formations served to give form and perspective to various animal depictions, such as the bears and horses found at the French sites of Lascaux and Pech-Merle. More detailed reliefs date back to ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, but those of a more naturalistic higher relief style like the frieze in Palpatine's office, were stylistically ancient Greek and Roman. Multiple panels of mythical or historical battles against centaurs, Amazons, or various human nations decorated their temples and mortuary structures.

## A PRIME EXAMPLE

Within the early Jedi temple of Ahch-To, there is a mosaic of the Prime Jedi, the first figure to wield the Force adhering to an early form of the Order's code. The black-and-white duality is reminiscent of the balance symbology of the Taoist yin and yang, in this case revealing the interlinked nature of both sides of the Force. This balanced, meditative pose, lightsaber held straight up dividing the light and dark, is more reminiscent of depictions of the enlightened gods or sages of Dharmic religions, going back thousands of years.

The medium through which this imagery is portrayed, though, is more at home in the ancient Roman world. Many buildings across that empire were decorated with colored cubes called tesserae, cemented together to make patterns and more complex scenes, from floral borders to portraits of the gods or scenes from everyday life.

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## A WORLD BETWEEN WORLDS

Lothal, the central planet in *Rebels*, provided a wealth of galactic art during Season Four, where ancient symbolism referenced both Earth-based forms and themes from previous animated series, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*.

In Episode 12, "Wolves and a Door," a painting of three powerful Force beings—the Father, the Daughter, and the Son, first seen in the Mortis trilogy of *The Clone Wars*—was uncovered by Imperial forces removing art from the Jedi temple on Lothal. The depiction is reminiscent of the archetypal art of important figures seen on temples all over the world. Triads of deities representing dark, light, and balance can be found in the pantheons of Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Dharmic, Celtic, and Norse religions, to name just a few, perhaps stemming from some common prehistoric belief system. The ancient Lothal art style, using constellation-like dots and lines within figurative images, is also reminiscent of the curving lines in carvings of animals made by the Pictish people of Scotland in the early medieval period.

This particular piece of ancient *Star Wars* art was a secret door to an ethereal, mystical realm. To open that door, Ezra recalled a lesson from his master, Kanan Jarrus, to listen to the stones and their stories. Painted Loth-wolves sprang to life and formed a circle that became a portal. Some have theorized that our ancestors may have believed that the stone walls in caves were portals of sorts, porous membranes they could put their hands against to touch an "otherworld," where spirits of nature and the ancestors resided. Ezra Bridger's journey through the circular gateway may well have resonated with the beliefs of people from tens of thousands of years ago.

10 Ancient markings in a Jedi temple on Lothal.

11 Loth-wolf images echoed animal cave art found on Earth.

12 Statues not unlike the Mortis gods, found on Peridea.

13 The Mortis gods as depicted in Jedi temple art on Lothal.

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**"THE STORYTELLER ARTIST MIGHT HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO DIVULGE ALL THE KNOWLEDGE BEHIND A STORY. IN DOING SO, THEY WOULD HAVE LOST THEIR POWER."**

Nash expands on this moment: "We can sometimes see this in the living traditions of the contemporary world, whereby the art speaks to the artist, who in turn creates the narrative for his or her audience. It is important to consider that stories have hidden and multiple meanings. Moreover, in ancient times as much as today, the storyteller artist might have been reluctant to divulge all the knowledge behind a story. In doing so, they would have lost their power."

Ezra and Kanan had visited the same temple in earlier seasons, together and with former Jedi Ahsoka Tano. On both occasions, they entered the temple itself, and experienced powerful visions. Within the chambers of the temple, there were images of humanoids and wolves, painted with a dark red pigment that was reminiscent of ancient art of hunters with their canine best friends.

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"It is not until the early Mesolithic [around 10,000 years ago] when one witnesses human figures, probably hunters or herders, accompanied with dogs," says Nash. "At that time, certain core areas of Europe were witnessing the domestication of dogs, along with control over wild species such as red deer, elk and reindeer, in the form of seasonal corralling, which we see depicted on rock art found in northern Scandinavia."

"Power can sometimes be considered a supernatural quality that is given to an individual, especially those who would have had an intimate relationship with cave walls and ceilings," Nash explains. "How would a storyteller artist negotiate the dangerous journey into a cave system with a limited light source to make his or her mark, and emerge from the quest to tell the story?" Perhaps these ancient artists were the Jedi of their day.

*Star Wars* itself is a reflection of human art and mythos, with George Lucas and his successors drawing on fragments of our past to construct the mythology of a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away. It continues to earn its place not just upon the canvas of modern storytelling but as part of the history of human imagination and our connection with our ancestors.

14 A mural of the *Ghost* crew, painted by Sabine Wren in honor of her comrades.

15 An astral map to Peridea included images of purrgil.

16 Scandinavian rock art.

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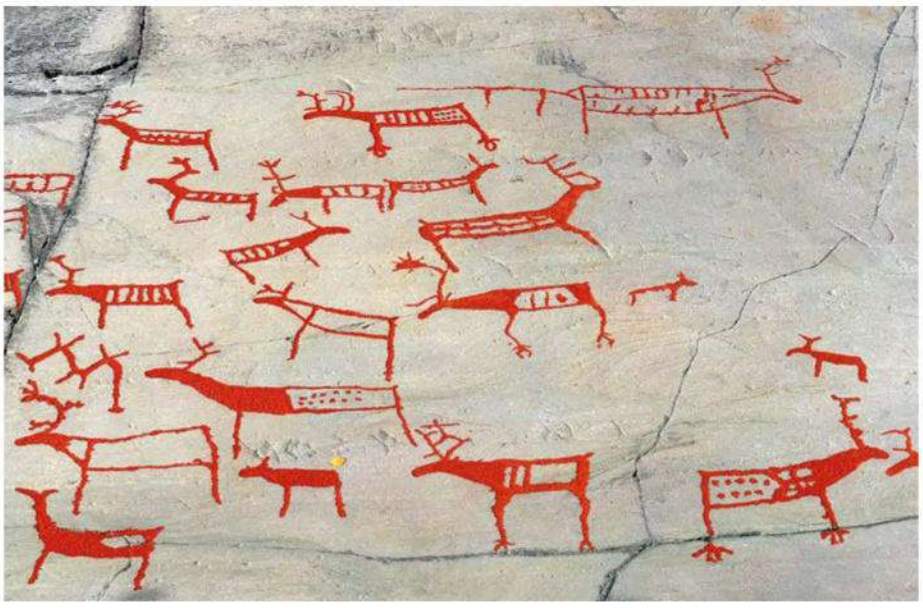
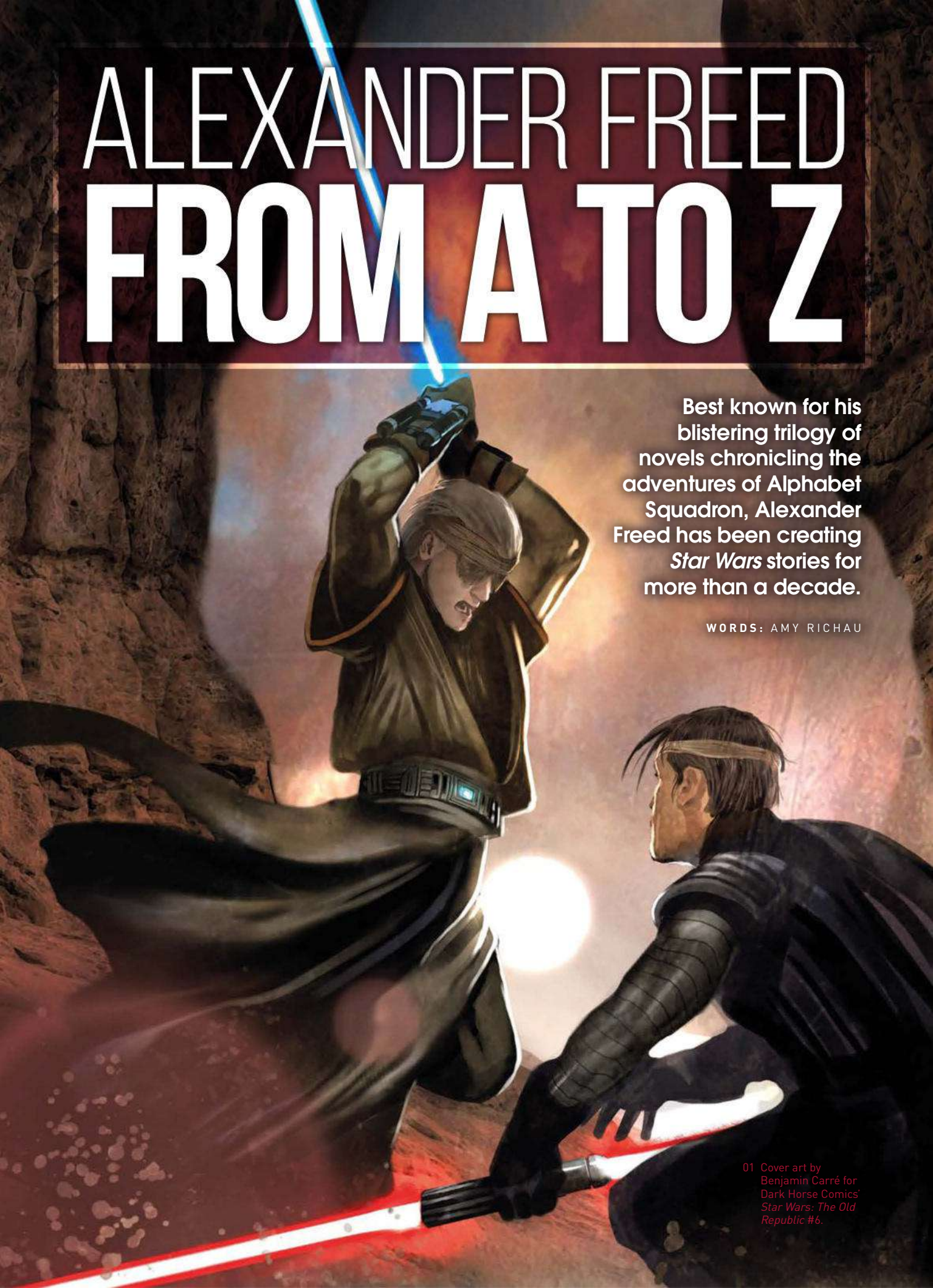


# ALEXANDER FREED FROM A TO Z

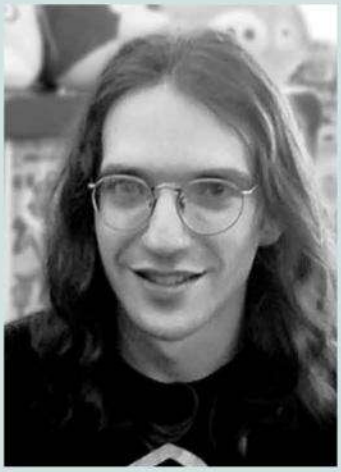
**Best known for his blistering trilogy of novels chronicling the adventures of Alphabet Squadron, Alexander Freed has been creating *Star Wars* stories for more than a decade.**

**WORDS:** AMY RICHAU



01 Cover art by Benjamin Carré for Dark Horse Comics' *Star Wars: The Old Republic* #6.

**Few authors have created more *Star Wars* stories across varied time periods in different mediums than Alexander Freed. From the Old Republic to the Battle of Endor, Freed's stories have continued the adventures of legacy characters, such as Hera Syndulla, and introduced new fan favorites, like the pilots from *Alphabet Squadron*. *Star Wars Insider* spoke with the author to look back at his *Star Wars* career, including the recent *Insider* original short fiction story "Shockwave."**



02 Author Alexander Freed.

03 *Star Wars*: The Old Republic videogame.

04 Freed wrote the exclusive short story "Shockwave" for *Insider* issue 220.

***Star Wars Insider*: Your most recent story for *Star Wars Insider* #220 focused on a character experiencing loss and victory simultaneously. What was your inspiration for this story and its main character, Ca Isiora?**

**Alexander Freed:** *Insider* editor Christopher Cooper came to me with a loose idea about a pilot who faces losing their wingmate at the Battle of Endor, and I was drawn to the notion of that battle as both an ending and beginning, not just for the galaxy, but for individuals as well. The *Alphabet Squadron* novels were very much about people trying to find their place in a changed, post-Endor galaxy, so Ca Isiora was a chance to experiment with that from a different angle, to tell a story about one character whose personal life was changing even as a monumental galactic shift was also occurring, and to look at the intersection between those events.

**Going back to the beginning of your *Star Wars* journey, the *Star Wars:* The Old Republic videogame is now more than a decade old. Can you explain what your involvement in the game was, and your other *Old Republic* stories?**

I've got so many fond memories of working on The Old Republic, and I'm delighted to see the game still going strong after all this time. I joined developer BioWare not knowing what I was jumping into (not even knowing for sure I'd be working on a *Star Wars* game!), but quickly got up to speed and ended up writing one of the game's eight primary storylines: the saga of the "Imperial Agent"—the officer, spy, and saboteur charged with defending the Sith Empire and somehow surviving the physical and ethical trials of working for Sith Lords and amoral bureaucrats. By the end of my involvement, I'd become the team's lead writer and contributed a whole host of other content, but the "Agent" was the one I called 'mine.'

**Have you ever envisaged more stories set in that era, perhaps revisiting its characters?**

My work on the "Imperial Agent" story remains near and dear to my heart. Characters like Darth Jadus, Keeper, Watcher Two, and ▶

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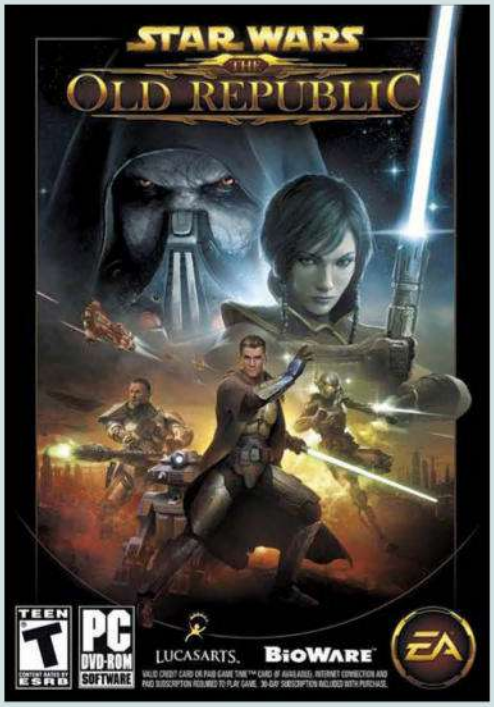


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**"I've got so many fond memories of working on The Old Republic, and I'm delighted to see the game still going strong after all this time."**

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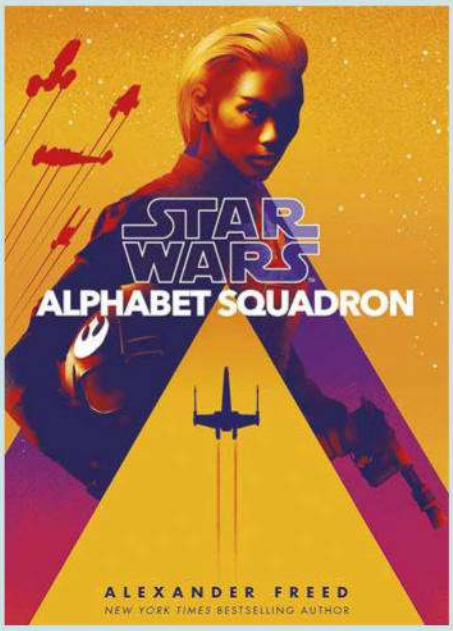
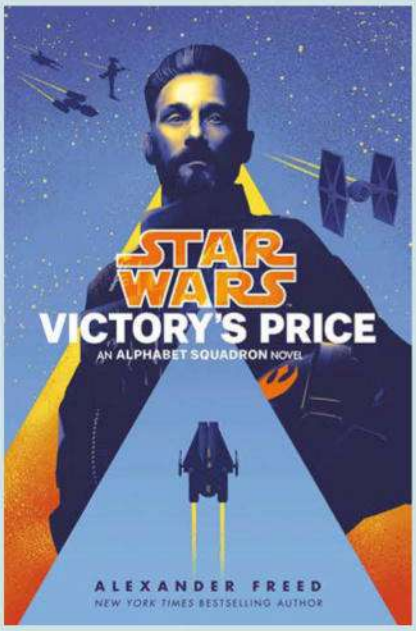
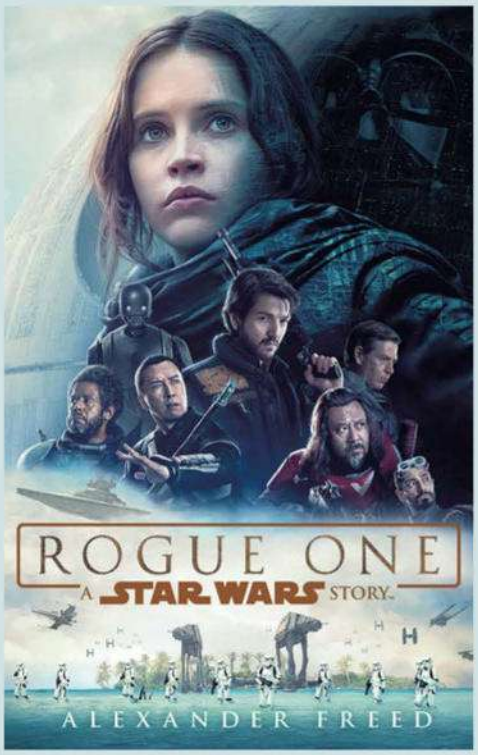





the whole merry crew of off-kilter companions. It was a wonderful era to tell stories in. The Sith Empire, in particular, represented a type of dark- side organization we don't see much of in other *Star Wars* eras, and while I don't have any specific ideas it'd be exciting to go back there someday.

05 Freed's *Alphabet Squadron* trilogy.

06 Freed wrote the novelization of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story.*

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## "THE JOY WAS TO HAVE SO MUCH SPACE TO EXPLORE IDEAS AND CHARACTERS, KNOWING I COULD TELL A STORY WITH A HUGE CAST."

**You wrote the novelization for *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* and *Battlefront: Twilight Company*, a tie-in novel to the videogame, and the novel trilogy *Star Wars: Alphabet Squadron*. How does your writing process change when working on such different kinds of stories?**
Writing the novelization was such a strange task. Almost the reverse of writing *Battlefront: Twilight Company*, in some respects. When the *Rogue One* project first came up, I remember Googling, "How to write a novelization?"

Instead of concentrating on the big ideas, the central themes, and figuring out how to dramatize them all and turn them into a story, I had all those moment-to-moment details provided for by the film's script and needed to wrap a novel around them. What that gave me was an opportunity to focus on prose and texture, which was a rewarding experience in its own right. I learned a lot from *Rogue One*.

The *Alphabet Squadron* trilogy was more the challenge of a trilogy being *bigger* than a single novel. I had more ideas to juggle, but my overall approach was pretty similar to my approach with *Twilight Company*. The joy was to have so much space to explore ideas and characters, knowing I could tell a story with a huge cast, all of whom would have their own stories, and attack multiple ideas from multiple angles.

**While novelizations are mostly bound to the story a film tells, they almost always include new or extended scenes for readers. What were your favorite parts from your *Rogue One* adaptation?**
Oh, that's a hard one! The novelization and the film have blended together in my head, so it's tough now for me to remember what scenes were original to the book and what was in the screenplay! I am pleased, however, with some of the "in-world" documentation that made it into the novel—the office memos chronicling the petty bickering about safety protocols

## "WYL IS CLOSER TO A CLASSIC HERO, WHILE YRICA IS TREMENDOUSLY FLAWED AND TREMENDOUSLY BURDENED. I'M GLAD THAT EACH HAS THEIR AUDIENCE."

in the Death Star's construction, say, or Mon Mothma's personal journals. Those were a lot of fun to write, and it seems like readers enjoyed them, too.

**Are there any characters you created that fans talk to you about more than others—characters who really resonated with fans?**
I'm happy to say that there's not a clear favorite. I love that different people find joy and meaning in different characters. But if I had to tally it up, I'd say Yrica Quell and Wyl Lark, both of whom are from the *Alphabet Squadron* novels, seem to resonate strongly for very different reasons. Wyl is closer to a classic hero, while Yrica is tremendously flawed and tremendously burdened. I'm glad that each has their audience. I try very hard to leave my characters in a place where their stories feel "complete."

**Which do you find easier to write—a battle in space or on land?**
Space battles are so much harder than ground battles, at least for me. On the ground you've got landmarks, terrain, weather, all sorts of elements that are easy to build into your choreography as well as bringing texture and mood and theme to a conflict. In space, you've either got your characters flying through an ▶

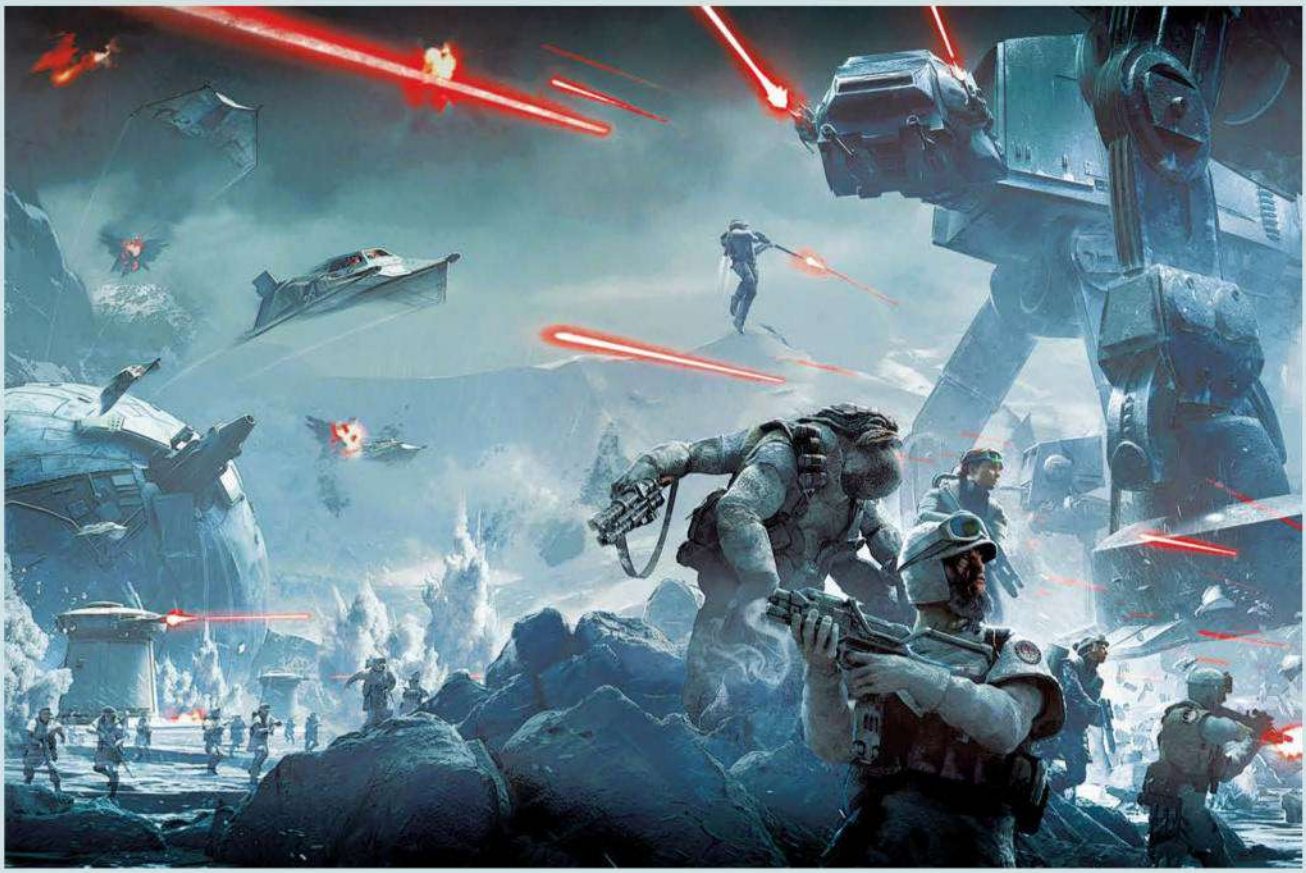
07 *Battlefront: Twightlight Company.*

## NEW HOPES

**What does Alexander Freed hope to see from future *Star Wars* tales, on screen and in print?**
"Variety and experimentation," says the author. "Whether through projects like *Star Wars: Visions* and Emma Mieko Candon's *Ronin* novel, remixing the very foundation of the setting and ignoring continuity, or stuff like *Star Wars: Andor*, doing something tonally and thematically distinct from so much past *Star Wars* work while nonetheless fitting right into the galaxy.

*Star Wars* is old enough and sturdy enough that there's plenty of room for different kinds of stories for different kinds of fans. Trying new things keeps it fresh, and allows opportunities for growth. It's the best way to keep *Star Wars* meaningful and relevant to the next generation of fans, and to make sure the spirit of the thing endures."

07



empty void or you've got to really work to create a fresh, imaginative landscape. It's why the *Alphabet Squadron* books so often involve combat in gas clouds, flying over cityscapes, through asteroid fields, and so forth.

I'm a pretty intense planner when it comes to my writing, but I'm a little looser with fight scenes. I know the big moments I need to hit ("the hero loses an arm in this fight"), I know the mood I want to convey, and the pace I want to achieve, but I don't try to set every move and countermove in stone before writing.

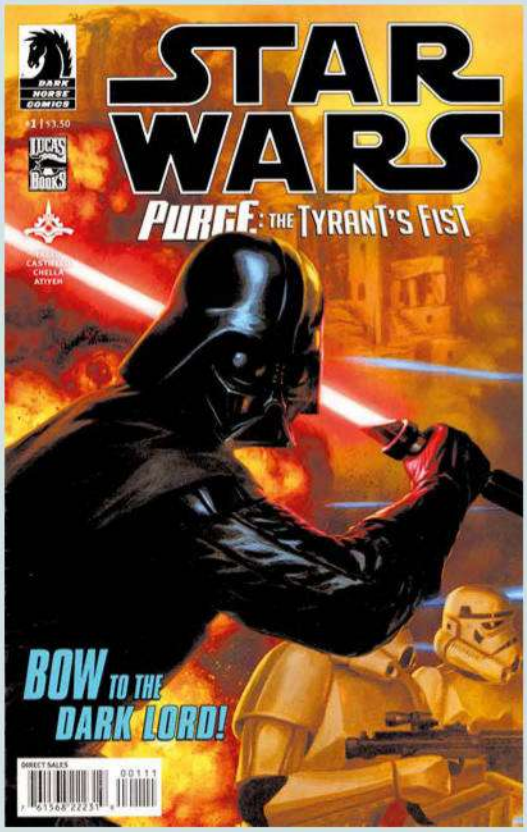
Small-scale skirmishes are a little different from large-scale engagements, mind you. For something like the siege at the end of *Battlefront: Twilight Company*, I needed to know the back-and-forth between the two armies, how they would counter each other's tactics, and so forth, before I started writing. Those sorts of scenes are great fun to create but they don't come along often.

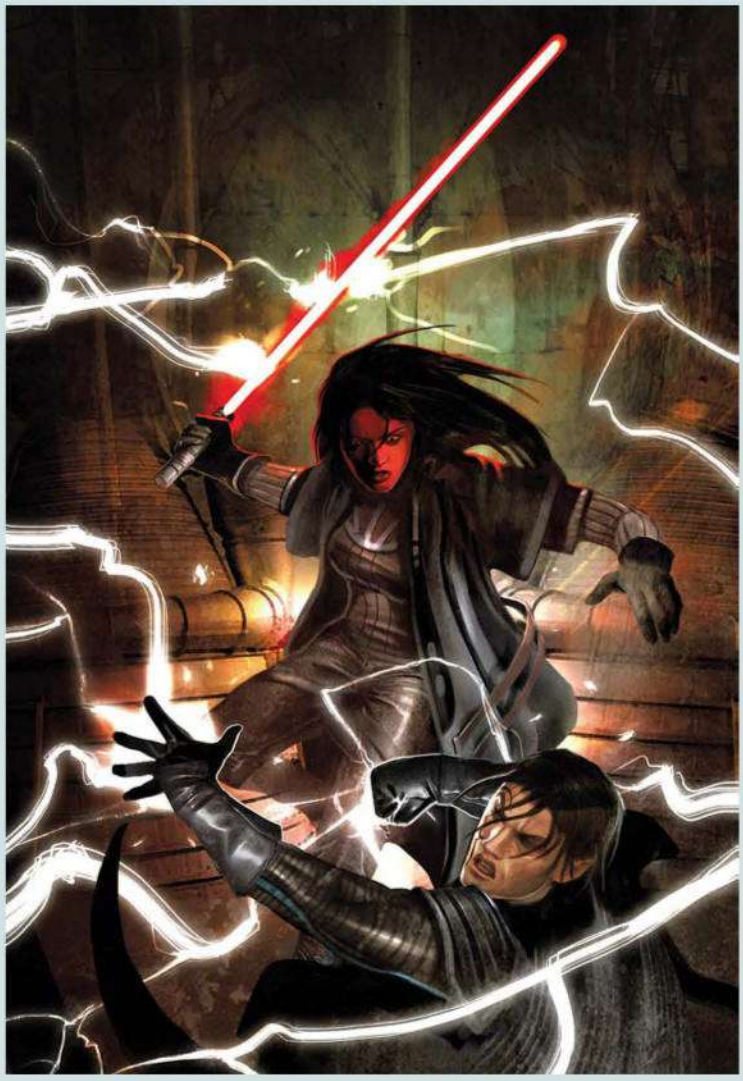
**What's your research process like for writing *Star Wars* books? Are there any real-life battles that inspired those in your novels?**

There's never enough time for all the research I'd like to do. I wish there was! I usually end up prioritizing the stuff that affects character and theme, and consuming information as fast as possible. Everything from interviews with war correspondents and military memoirs to veterans' online message boards have helped me in the past, along with political journalism, past and present. All of it helps inform the sorts of environments the characters live in and the pressures and motivations they feel, even while none of it *directly* translates. There's no armed force in *Star Wars* that even remotely looks much like the U.S. military. The rebels were a guerilla force, the Empire was a dictatorship, the Republic had to create a military machine out of nothing to fight the Clone Wars. All of that had an influence on my characters and the organizations.

I have no military background myself and I'm aware of my own ignorance. I know there are limits to what I can hope to achieve, but it's my sincere hope to avoid dishonoring the experiences of veterans, survivors, and others who've seen so much more than I have. That's what the research is for.

08



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08 *Star Wars: Purge*. Cover art by Dan Scott.

09 Cover art for *Star Wars: The Old Republic* #5 by Benjamin Carré.

**Do you have a favorite battle in *Star Wars*?**

How many times have we seen creators draw inspiration from *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*'s Battle of Endor, with its intertwining ground battle, fleet engagement in space, and moments of personal confrontation? There's a reason folks keep going back to that one. It was absolutely brilliant. The subplots weaved in and out effortlessly, with nameless combatants getting memorable moments alongside our heroes, adding a real sense of scope and pathos. I'm not sure anyone has ever bested that one.

**When you incorporate legacy characters into your stories, such as Hera Syndulla, do you find it necessary to research all the stories they previously appeared in?**

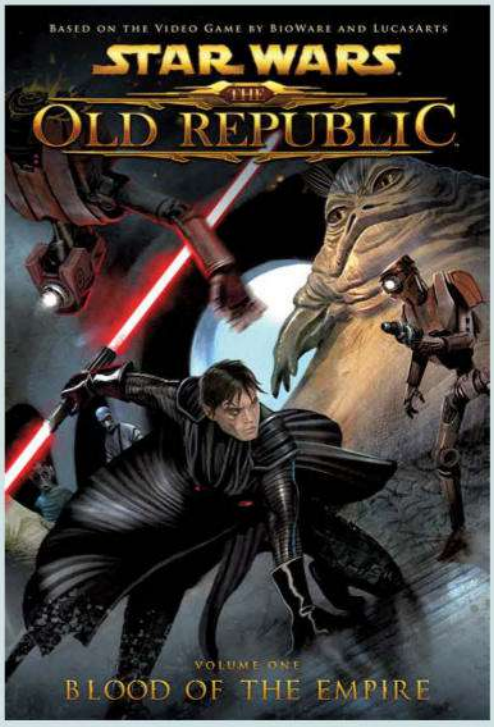
With the vastness of *Star Wars* lore, it's very hard to take in every single story, and of course, the more important the character then the harder it gets. So, I triage. With Hera, for example, knowing *Star Wars Rebels* was a must. I made sure to read some of her appearances in the Marvel comics because, like the Hera I was writing for *Alphabet Squadron*, they were post-*Rebels* and would help inform her "General Syndulla" persona. When it came to Hera's appearances outside *Rebels* as a younger character, or during the *Rebels* timeline, I tried to be generally aware of the stories but didn't usually seek them out unless something particular struck me as connected to what I was doing. Sometimes knowing where to look for background is more important than having every scrap of background at hand!

10

11

10 "The Lost Sons" 11 ran across five issues of *The Old Republic* comic. Cover art by Benjamin Carré.

12 "Blood of the Empire" was initially published as a webcomic by Dark Horse.

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**Is there an era of *Star Wars* that you have never written in that appeals to you, or a character you'd like to take a crack at writing?**

I'd love a chance to tell a Jedi story leaning into the mystical aspects of the setting, especially as a novel. I've written so much military, political, and espionage material, Sith comics, and all sorts of "person on the street" stories—and I love grounding the *Star Wars* galaxy and exploring the lives of everyday characters—but it would be fun to bring things full circle back to the Jedi someday.

## ALEXANDER FREED'S *STAR WARS* STORIES

***Star Wars: The Old Republic: Blood of the Empire***
Dark Horse Comics, 2011

***Star Wars: The Old Republic: The Lost Suns***
Dark Horse Comics, 2012

***Star Wars: Purge***
Co-written with W. Haden Blackman and John Ostrander
Dark Horse Comics, 2013

***Battlefront: Twilight Company***
Del Rey, 2015

***Rogue One: A Star Wars Story (novelization)***
Del Rey, 2016

***Star Wars: Alphabet Squadron Trilogy***
Del Rey
***Alphabet Squadron*** (2019)
***Shadow Fall*** (2020)
***Victory's Price*** (2022)

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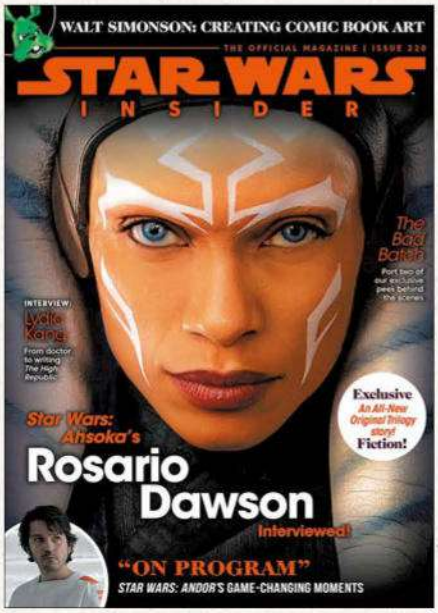


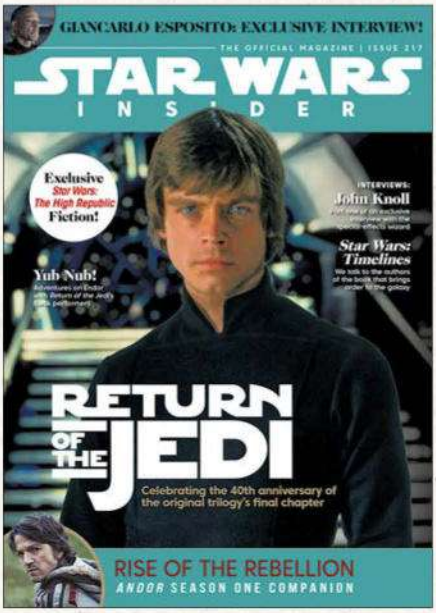
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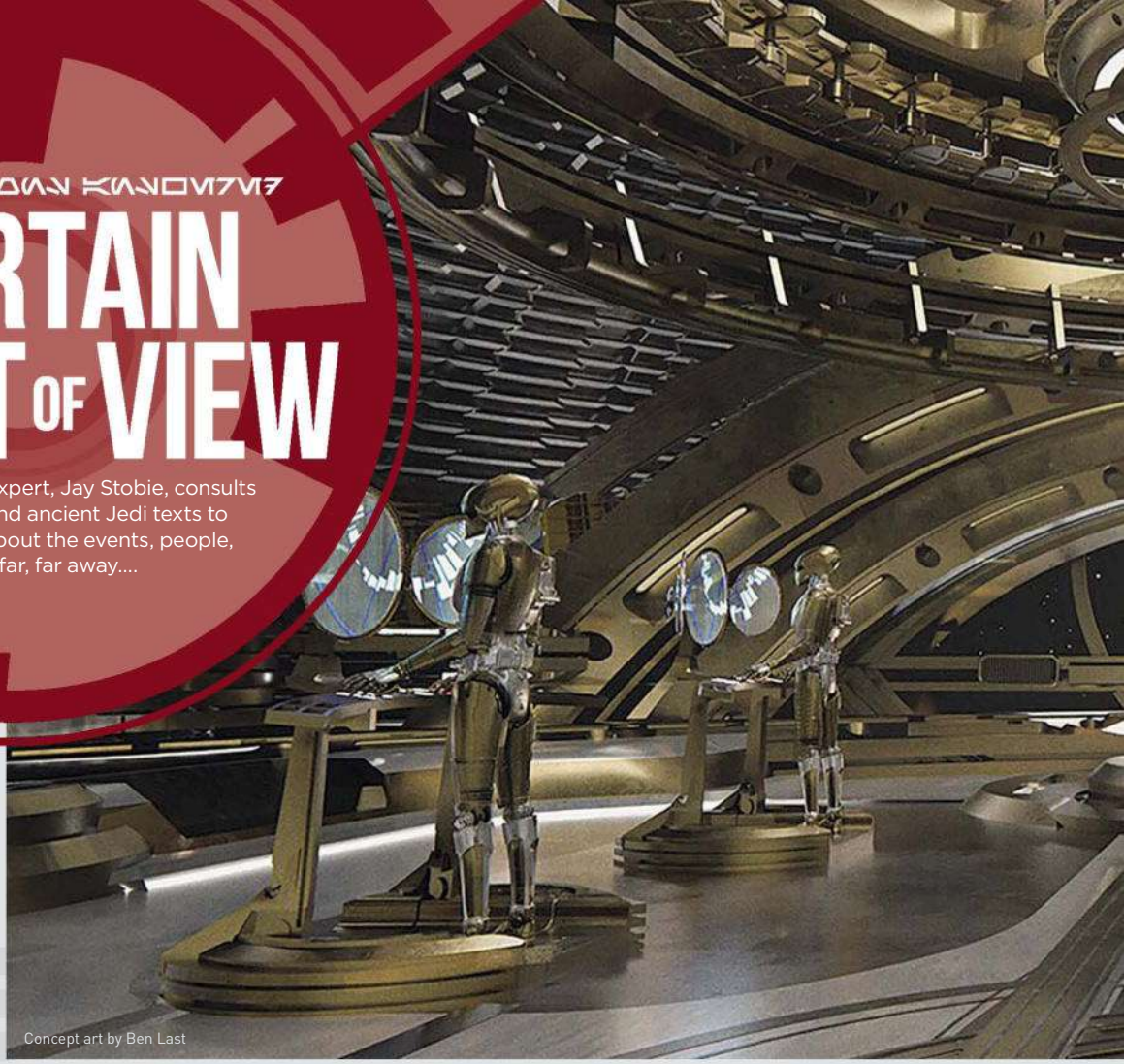
VOLT CONVERSION KNOWING

# A CERTAIN POINT OF VIEW

Our resident *Star Wars* expert, Jay Stobie, consults his library of holocrons and ancient Jedi texts to answer your questions about the events, people, and places of the galaxy far, far away....



Concept art by Ben Last

**"How was Morgan Elsbeth able to maintain her influence on Corellia and construct a ship as massive as the *Eye of Sion* in secret?"**
**Katarina Taylor, Berlin, Germany**

**Given Morgan Elsbeth's well-known Imperial ties and the fact that the *Eye of Sion* was large enough to encompass Grand Admiral Thrawn's Star Destroyer, it is natural to be curious about how such secrecy was achieved. Before we dive into specifics, we must first consider a crucial element to our dilemma: the colossal scale of the *Star Wars* galaxy.**

Distances are so vast in our own Milky Way galaxy that we comprehend them by measuring in light years, where one unit equals the nearly 6 trillion miles that light travels in a single year. The *Star Wars* galaxy we know measures an astounding 120,000 light years, and that expansive territory contained roughly 400 billion stars and over 3.2 million habitable star systems. Considering this context, even something as enormous as the Death Star's moon-sized superstructure could be secreted away from prying eyes.

Bureaucracy is another key piece in our puzzle. Numerous bureaucrats and officials in prominent positions survived upheavals in governments and galactic affairs, whether they fell in with the new regime or opposed it. One can easily imagine how

## Uncovering The Unknown

### Obi-Wan Kenobi

When Obi-Wan Kenobi's investigation into attempts on Padmé Amidala's life led him to Kamino, he was shocked to discover that the Kaminoans had covertly created an entire clone army for the Galactic Republic. Despite the disturbing revelation, the Republic eventually deployed these soldiers in its war against the Separatists.

### Jyn Erso

Galen Erso issued a dire warning about the Empire's powerful new weapon, the dreaded Death Star, in a heartfelt message watched by his daughter, Jyn Erso, in Saw Gerrera's hideout on Jedha. Her father's words, along with his death on Eadu, motivated Jyn to head to Scarif and hunt down the space station's schematics.

### Bo-Katan Kryze

Equipped with the Darksaber, Bo-Katan Kryze led a group of Mandalorians back to their devastated homeworld with the hope of resettling on the planet. Kryze's band, which included Din Djarin, stumbled upon Moff Gideon's hidden base of operations, covertly constructed deep below the surface of Mandalore.

the complexities of administrating an entire galactic society would make it easier to conceal one's activities in the weeds of officialdom—a reality exploited by early rebel leaders during the Imperial era. While individuals such as Wilhuff Tarkin and Wulff Yularen remained loyal to Palpatine after the Republic transitioned into the Empire, others like Bail Organa and Mon Mothma endured their positions in the new galactic order to covertly undermine the new administration.

The boot was on the other foot when Ahsoka Tano and General Hera Syndulla met former Imperial Myn Weaver, the regional ▶

**Hera Syndulla**

An inspection of Corellia's Santhe Shipyards, a facility that recycled Imperial hyperdrive parts for the New Republic fleet, led Hera Syndulla and Ahsoka Tano to discover that cores recovered from Super Star Destroyers were destined for Morgan Elsbeth's *Eye of Sion* at Seatos.

**Kylo Ren**

After acquiring a Sith wayfinder on Mustafar, Supreme Leader Kylo Ren used the artifact to guide him into the Unknown Regions, where he found the resurrected Emperor Palpatine on Exegol. The hidden planet was home to a secret fleet of Star Destroyers and countless Sith troopers, ready to defeat what remained of General Leia Organa and her allies.

supervisor of Corellia's Santhe Shipyards. He openly admitted that every level of post-Imperial government contained people who had been on the losing side. Whether driven by ideology or profit, these disreputable bureaucrats were able to discreetly funnel resources to Morgan Elsbeth and keep quiet about her operation.

Why would any government allow people who maintained uncertain loyalties to remain in positions of power? Just as the New Republic salvaged old Imperial hyperdrives at Corellia rather than build its entire fleet from scratch, employing officials already familiar with the inner workings of government saved time and money. Similarly, the New Republic Amnesty Program aimed to harness the knowledge of Dr. Penn Pershing and other ex-Imperials for its own benefit. A practical component also influenced the tactic: while the Rebel Alliance was focused on taking down Emperor Palpatine and Darth Vader, replacing Myn Weaver wasn't necessarily at the top of the to-do list during the New Republic's early stages.

## Sleight of Hand

The perils of bureaucracy could be paired with other factors that decreased the likelihood of a secret project being detected, most notably the active intent to ensure one's activities went unobserved. Subterfuge allowed a seemingly trustworthy individual the chance to fool their superiors, and Count Dooku pursued this course when he deleted Kamino from the Jedi Archives so as not to draw any attention to the clone army being grown on the planet. Extra security provided by the Empire, both in terms of defenses present at Scarif and using parts created by unwitting laborers at Narkina 5, kept the Death Star's existence under wraps. The remoteness of the Unknown Regions permitted the First Order to gather its strength and assemble a fighting force capable of challenging the New Republic, while Moff Gideon's Mandalorian base was situated on a barren planet most deemed uninhabitable. Even the seemingly innocuous navigational difficulties surrounding Exegol masked the Sith fleet built by a resurrected Palpatine.

When considered individually, the sheer size of the galaxy, bureaucracy's impact, and the numerous accounts of other large-scale clandestine operations could help explain how Morgan Elsbeth maintained her influence and manufactured the *Eye of Sion* without catching the New Republic's attention. It was the combination of these elements that truly solidified Elsbeth's ability to continue to maneuver in the wake of the Empire's downfall.

## DEATH STAR DEADLINES

**22 BSW4:**
Poggle the Lesser delivered the Geonosian plans for the Death Star to Count Dooku in the midst of the First Battle of Geonosis. As a Republic victory seemed imminent, Dooku fled the planet and traveled to Coruscant, where he provided the schematics to Darth Sidious (secretly Supreme Chancellor Palpatine) in a clandestine rendezvous.

**19 BSW4:**
The Death Star construction site welcomed several high-ranking officials for an important inspection. Emperor Palpatine, Darth Vader, and Wilhuff Tarkin stood aboard a *Venator*-class Star Destroyer and observed as work continued on the weapon's superstructure.

**1 BSW4:**
Jedha City was annihilated by a single reactor ignition from the Death Star's superlaser. Hoping to exploit the flaw her father had hidden within the battle station's design, Jyn Erso infiltrated the Imperial Citadel facility on Scarif and transmitted the Death Star schematics to an awaiting Rebel Alliance fleet.

**0:**
Following the Death Star's destruction of Alderaan, the Rebel Alliance analyzed the stolen plans and launched a strike on the station during the Battle of Yavin. Luke Skywalker used the Force to target a thermal exhaust port, and then fired two proton torpedoes that caused a cataclysmic chain reaction that destroyed the superweapon.

**4 ASW4:**
Upon learning of the existence of a second Death Star, the Rebel Alliance organized an intricate assault to prevent its completion. Despite this intel being a ruse orchestrated by Emperor Palpatine to defeat the rebels, the Battle of Endor resulted in an Alliance victory and the fall of the Empire.

## Protecting Apprentices

Not all matters of galactic importance rested on the shoulders of armies, fleets, or superweapons. Aware of Anakin Skywalker's fate, Obi-Wan Kenobi initially chose to safeguard Luke Skywalker from his father's true identity, merely claiming that Darth Vader had betrayed and murdered him.

That knowledge could have altered Luke's Jedi path, or, as had been the case with Reva's prior assault on the Lars homestead, further endangered the boy's life. The same held true for the identity of Luke's sister, Leia Organa, whom Obi-Wan Kenobi also sought to shield from Vader and the Emperor.

## WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

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# PORTRAYING PAIGE TICO

## Feeling represented within the *Star Wars* galaxy

**Despite Hayley Cole's love for *Star Wars*, she often felt that there were few characters she could truly connect or resonate with. "So, when *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* featured not one, but *two* badass Asian female characters, I couldn't have been more excited," exclaims the cosplayer.**

"They were even played by actors who shared my Vietnamese heritage! Seeing the Tico sisters get to be heroes in the *Star Wars* galaxy felt like I was finally watching someone who could be me on the screen—it was a powerful, joyful, and magical moment."

With help from Danny Chen and Alex Cole, Hayley built an astounding Paige Tico cosplay to experience those feelings of pride, joy, and excitement every time she put on her Resistance gunner outfit. "Many people came up to me at *Star Wars* Celebration to compliment my Paige cosplay, and I was extremely touched by the sheer number of fans who not only knew who she was, but also appreciated her character as much as I did."

Inspired to cosplay as Fennec Shand for the same reasons, Hayley again turned to Cole

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and Mykel Gosch to assist with the build. "Ming-Na Wen portrays her spectacularly, and it is mind-blowing to see a strong woman of color not only survive (though they almost had me there with her initial fake-out!) but become a major character in a *Star Wars* series."

Hayley's Paige and Fennec cosplays have proved to be revelations for her. "Cosplaying as these two characters has both empowered me and helped me build connections with other *Star Wars* fans and fellow API creators. I am thankful to everyone who helped create these characters, for their courage, selflessness, and heroism. They are inspirational to many others like me across our small corner of the galaxy."

Photos by Triple Click Photo and Alex Cole

# ARTISTS' ALLEY

Talented *Star Wars* fans share their amazing drawings inspired by the galaxy far, far away....

### 01 "THE MANDALORIAN JEDI" AND "THE CHOSEN ONE" BY NASTIA DEKVA

Nastia Dekva loved Sabine Wren's character development in *Star Wars: Ahsoka* and captured the Mandalorian's poncho look in her art-style. "Sabine's strength and determination are very inspiring to me," she says. The prequels are also special to Nastia, who emphasizes Anakin Skywalker's importance to the saga. "I really love depicting his 'before the fall' era in my drawings. After another *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* rewatch, I couldn't help but draw happy and peaceful Padawan Anakin. I really miss him like that!"

### 02 "AHSOKA" BY LAURA ROTARU

"As a massive fan of *Star Wars*, I always loved the character designs," notes fan artist Laura Rotaru. "One of my favorites is Ahsoka Tano, the courageous Togruta Jedi, who stands as a beacon of wisdom and growth within the *Star Wars* galaxy. Drawing inspiration from key moments in Ahsoka's journey, my fan art shows her evolution, from her early days as Anakin Skywalker's Padawan to her decision to walk away from the Jedi Order to her return to action."

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## SIMON KASSIANIDES: Mandalore's Axe

Aaron Alcock poses with Simon Kassianides, who portrayed Axe Woves in *The Mandalorian*.

**Simon Kassianides received a pleasant surprise at *Star Wars* Celebration when Aaron Alcock approached his autograph table dressed as Axe Woves, the character he portrays in *Star Wars: The Mandalorian*.**

"You could see how much it meant to him," recalls Aaron. "He shook my hand and said, 'Axe! How're you doing?' This instantly evaporated any nervousness I was feeling." The two discussed Axe's most recent encounters with Bo-Katan Kryze in *The Mandalorian*, particularly those in the Season Three episode, "Guns for Hire." The pair also chatted about the aesthetic differences between Axe's beskar armor in the show's second and third seasons. "I asked Simon which armor he prefers, and he mentioned how Axe's new armor allows a lot more movement for his fighting scenes," remembers Aaron. "Meeting Simon Kassianides was everything I thought it would be."

Aaron Alcock shows off the picture signed by Simon Kassianides.

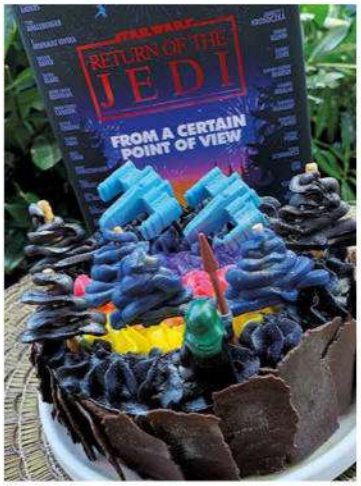


# JEDI DELIGHTS

## Blending *Star Wars* books, baking, and blue milk

**Jacquelyn Smith immediately fell in love with *Star Wars* when she saw *A New Hope* in 1977. "Lightsabers, the Force, space battles! And I was always a Luke Skywalker kind of girl. Sorry, Han!" she jokes. "My world changed when I borrowed a copy of the novelization. I never returned that copy." Jacquelyn's enthusiasm was rekindled when she took her first child to the midnight premiere of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*.**

Her focus shifted to parenting books, but a chance encounter with a copy of Claudia Gray's *Star Wars: Master & Apprentice* renewed her connection to the galaxy far, far away once again. "I realized I'd missed a great many things, and I began to get caught up. I also read about a new thing called *Project Luminous* that I could jump into from the beginning. Super exciting!" Jacquelyn then paired her literary pursuits with her baking skills. "The two collided when I thought it would be fun to make not just blue milk, but blue food, and combine my hobbies."




Jacquelyn particularly enjoys *The High Republic*, and makes treats to celebrate book birthdays. "One of my favorites is the blue cream pie I made for *Star Wars: Path of Deceit* with the mountains and the Jedi symbol in blue chocolate. Some of my creations take a hour or two, some have taken days or weeks to plan." A self-taught baker, Jacquelyn notes that not every creation has turned out as she'd hoped. "My kids wouldn't even eat some of them," she laughs. "I've learned a lot over the past few years, had fun, and made some yummy things, and loved sharing my creations with other *Star Wars* fans."

# HEAVY MANDO

## Drawing on concept art for cosplay crafting

Southern California-based Josh Reynolds was introduced to *Star Wars* by his dad and grew up with the prequels and the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* animated show.

**"I always wanted to try cosplaying, after seeing so many cool clones, stormtroopers, and Mandalorian costumes all the time. What really made me go for it was seeing Paz Vizsla on screen," says Reynolds. "Being a big dude myself, I never thought I could pull it off, but seeing a big-armored character like Paz really inspired me."**

Josh's armor is made of PVC foam (sometimes known as sintra board), EVA foam, and 3D- printed details. "My helmet is inspired by the Heavy Mandalorian concept art by Brian Matyas, so I have that split-visor look," Reynolds says. "Over time, I've added some little bits of Aurebesh text. Next to my wrist rocket it says, 'Eat this,' and on my shoulder, it says, 'Family is more than blood.'"

One of Josh's favorite things about cosplaying is telling a story with the costume, particularly through the weathering, adding dents, scratches, and blaster and scorch marks of fights or battles. "Say your armor has been on a desert planet—it's going to have become worn and there might be rust spots in the crevices. You can add a tan tinge with some dust all over to show it's been there for a while," he explains. "The weathering process makes everything look and feel super in-world."

# The *Star Wars* Archive

**The behind-the-scenes story of a galaxy far, far away....**

01 Behind the camera, filming this intense scene between Darth Vader (David Prowse) and Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) for *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* appeared to have been more relaxed for the crew than the actors.

## HEADS IN THE CLOUDS

**Luke Skywalker went through the wringer in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*. Whacked by a wampa and almost crushed by an AT-AT on Hoth, his time training with Yoda on Dagobah was wet and, at times, terrifying. But it was Cloud City that truly tested the character's mettle as he faced off against Darth Vader, the man he'd believed had betrayed and murdered his father.**

The role challenged Mark Hamill both physically and emotionally, in ways he had not experienced while filming *Star Wars: A New Hope* three years earlier. The actor trained hard, building muscle tone and endurance for the acrobatics he would perform on the Dagobah set, and for the lengthy lightsaber duel that provided the climax of the movie. Hamill more than proved his acting credentials with a devastatingly raw performance as Luke learned the awful truth about Vader. ▸

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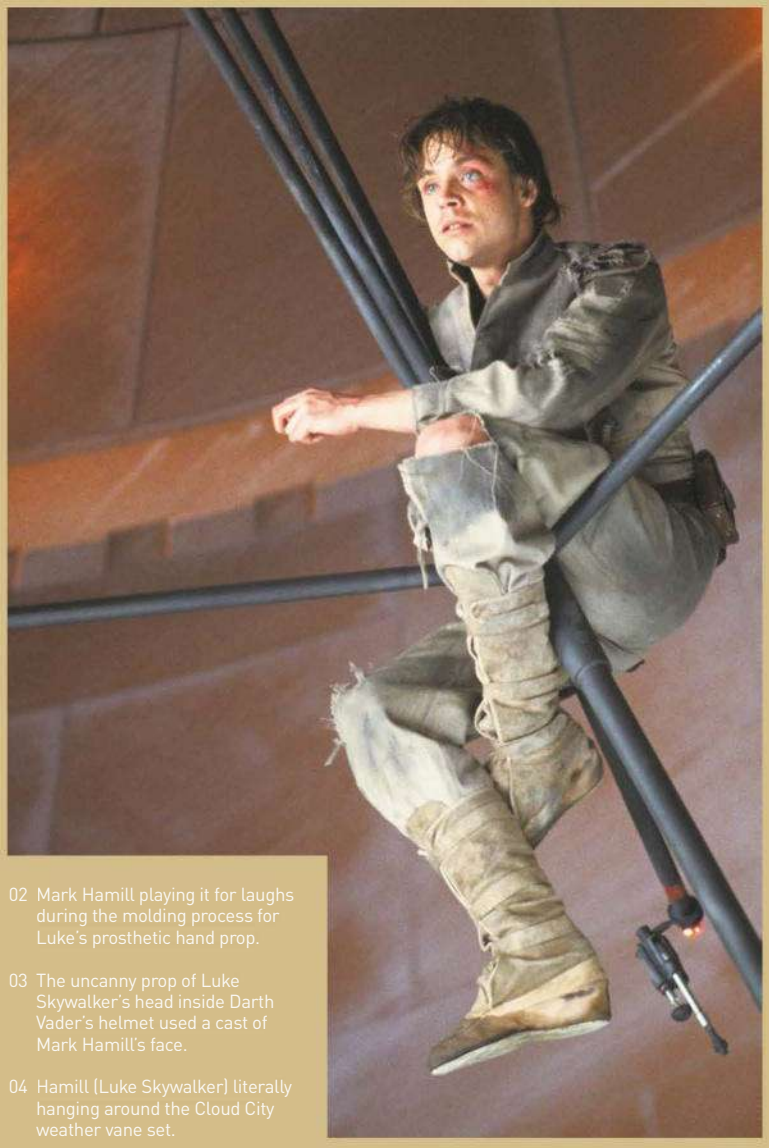


02 Mark Hamill playing it for laughs during the molding process for Luke's prosthetic hand prop.

03 The uncanny prop of Luke Skywalker's head inside Darth Vader's helmet used a cast of Mark Hamill's face.

04 Hamill (Luke Skywalker) literally hanging around the Cloud City weather vane set.

# CARBON COPIED

**Han Solo faced his own travails in *The Empire Strikes Back*, resulting in the smuggler being frozen in carbonite and spirited away by the bounty hunter Boba Fett.**

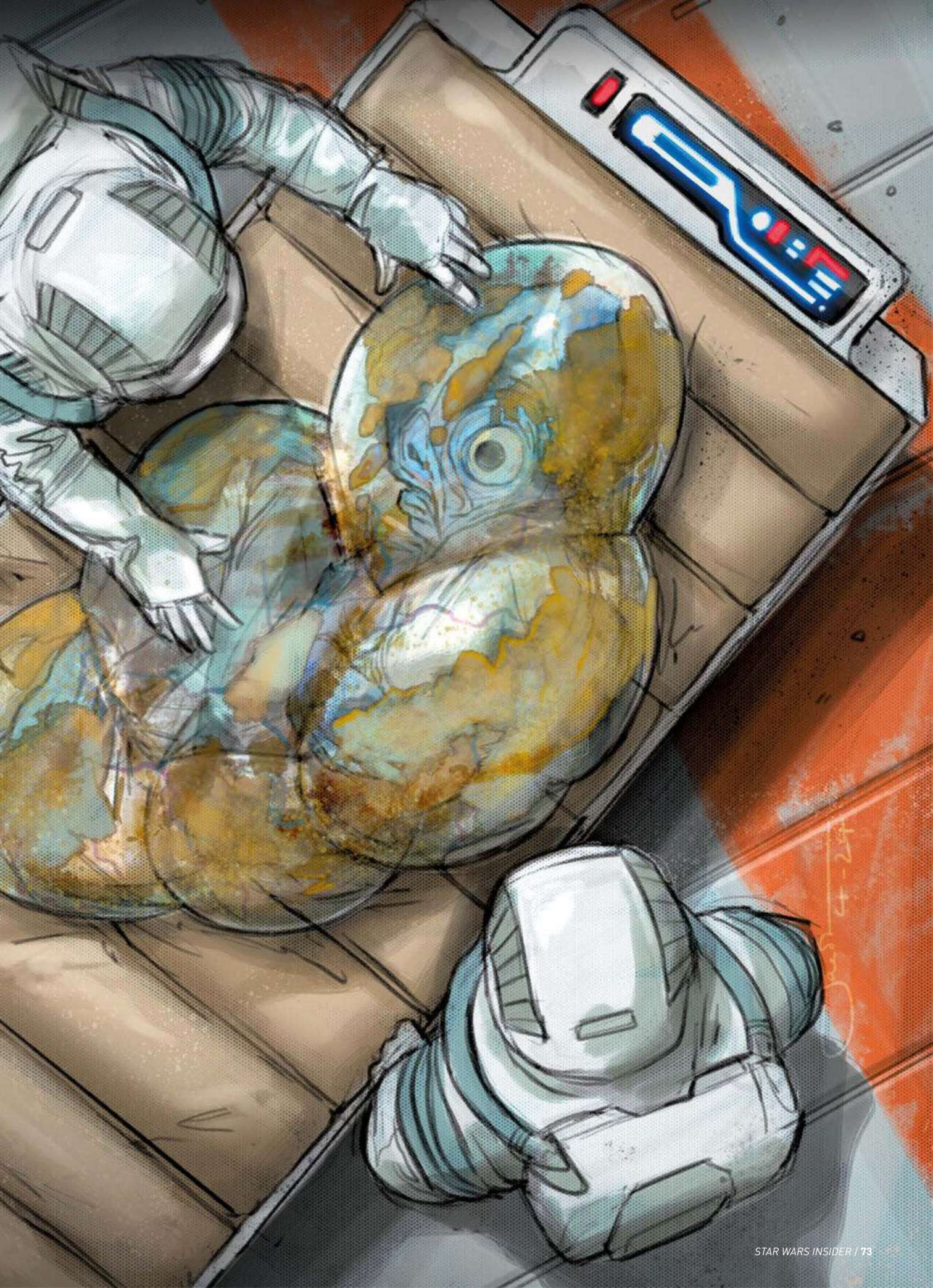
To help create the oblong prop that would emerge from the carbon freezing chamber's pit, Harrison Ford gamely endured having his face covered in molding compound to capture his features—a process carried out by makeup designer Stuart Freeborn (pictured above). However, Solo's body from the neck down was provided by fellow actor Alan Harris, who also played the Trandoshan bounty hunter Bossk in the movie.

# TALES FROM THE OCCLUSION ZONE

# "Family Ties"

By Lydia Kang

Illustration by Jake Lunt Davies



**Previously, in a galaxy far, far away....**

**Missing and presumed dead, Chief Ghal Tarpfen is alive but critically ill. Rescued by the RDC crew aboard the *Aurie* in Nihil space, they race to save her despite being confounded by her mysterious affliction. Will they be able to find out what happened to Ghal—and a way out of the Occlusion Zone—before they all succumb to the mysterious blight?**

**"I don't like this. I don't like this at all."**

**Visma had lost track of whether she was muttering out loud or screaming inside her head. She stood on the Nihil prison transport ship as Corporal Elping Tsoo and Captain Joss Adren accompanied the desiccated but living body of Ghal Tarpfen onto the *Aurie*. The small portable hover gurney held the Mon Calamari, who lay in a state of biostasis within a hibernation shell that her body had extruded. In the airlock, Joss spoke aloud, his voice muffled by his protective respirator.**

"Pikka. We're in. Close the airlock, and stay where you are. There was definitely some sort of pathogen or bioweapon on that ship that caused the death of the crew."

Pikka's voice sounded guarded over the comms. "Is it truly Ghal Tarpfen? I thought she was dead!"

"I have a gut feeling it's her. I just hope we can save her."

*And for what?* Visma thought bitterly. They had located the prison ship's Path drive, but it was speckled with the grayish stuff that had infected nearly every area of the ship. They couldn't bring it back and take the chance that it would cause the *Aurie* and its passengers to succumb.

"Pikka, stay right where you are," Elping said. "We'll take the patient to the isolation room."

Visma peered through one of the less-opaque areas of the bulbous shell that was wrapped around Ghal. A low moan could be heard, followed by garbled, muffled words. Visma concentrated, trying to make sense of what she was trying to say.

"It's coming…someone has to tell them…get away…the Stormwall…"

Elping's biosensor beeped a warning. "Vital signs are getting weaker. We have to work quickly."

Pikka had set up a protected corridor from the airlock to the makeshift medical cabin. The door behind them slid closed securely. Visma could feel the pressure in her ears pop a little. She noted an air current in the room, a sign that the ventilation was being directed out of the room and out of the *Aurie*. The Mon Calamari had stopped moaning and murmuring. Elping locked the hover gurney in place.

"She's quiet now. Maybe that's good?" Joss said.

"Maybe that's bad," Elping said grimly.

"The…substance. It's not all over her, but it's definitely on her. Look at her hands. Her feet," Visma said.

Ghal was still in the same position she'd been in when they found her in her prison cell—like a tadpole that had dried out in a tight curl beneath layers of peeling, hardened skin. Specks of the grayish matter that had infected the prison ship clung to the tips of her webbed feet and hands. She wore no boots, and scraps of clothing clung to her body as if painted on. Her yellow eyes were unblinking beneath a dried shell of tissue surrounding her head.

"Why does she look like this? Did the Nihil do this to her?" Joss asked.

"I don't think so," Elping said, studying the translucent shell-like covering encasing Ghal. "The Mon Calamari are an amphibious species, and sometimes amphibians can undergo a sort of state of hibernation or stasis in times of severe drought. In this case, perhaps stress or illness."

His biosensor began beeping an even louder warning. His eyes widened, and he stared at Ghal through the protective layer cocooned around her.

"She's stopped breathing!" Joss said.

"We don't have a medical droid!" Visma said. "What are we supposed to do?"

"Sixen," Joss hollered. "Don't you know any… medical speak? Can't you help?"

"I am quite helpful!" C-06N replied cheerfully, still wearing his protective garb over his silvery body. "I am capable of conversing with other programs, but I was specifically designed by my maker to help the Tarkin family with interspecies communication, regarding the particular cultural nuances and linguistic dynamics--"

"Sixen!" Elping cut off the droid. "Go plug yourself into the wall, cross reference the medical program on the *Aurie* and tell us anything actually helpful!"

C-06N tossed his head indignantly and shuffled over to the side of the small room. Soon, he was plugged into a port. "Oh! Well, look at this. An interspecies algorithm for medical emergencies. Splendid! Step one. Is the patient breathing if gaseous respiration is possible?"

Visma spun around to stare at Ghal. Inside the hardened exterior, the Mon Calamari's chest was no longer moving.

"She's not breathing!" Visma said. Her own heart began to race. Visma could shoot down an enemy combatant at eight hundred meters in the dark. But what was happening to Ghal was beyond anything she could fight or outsmart. She was so out of her league, and the helplessness made her want to scream. She'd felt that helplessness before. When she was a child, when her family was taken from her. When her whole life changed. No one had done anything to help her. The sensation was so familiar right now she could hardly think straight.

"But if she's in stasis—maybe she doesn't need to breathe?" Joss said.

"Step two," C-06N announced. "Does the patient have a pulse, if a liquid pulsatile vascular system exists?"

Elping searched the scanner in his hand. He touched a few buttons, and it began blaring.

"No pulse. Even if she was in stasis, she would still have a faint one. She's dying," he whispered. "We have to do something."

***"Visma could shoot down an enemy combatant at eight hundred meters in the dark. But what was happening to Ghal was beyond anything she could fight or outsmart."***

Joss and Elping exchanged ideas back and forth, talking so fast, it was a cyclone of words and questions. They were holding back, afraid to touch Ghal for fear the substance might affect them too. But then, what was the point of bringing her on the *Aurie* if they were just going to stand there and do nothing?

"Breaking the shell? I don't have the data for that, Captain Adren," Elping was saying about something. "What if that kills her?"

"You have a better idea?" He pointed at the curled, lifeless form of the Mon Calamari woman. Just looking at her, Visma felt a tightness in her chest, as if some mighty unseen being were squeezing her. She took a breath of air, but the respirator felt too confining. She had to force herself not to yank it off. But she couldn't breathe, watching Ghal dying before her.

"Mon Calamari, on rare occasions in times of historic drought, prior to the development of modern environmental controls, have gone into suspended animation in the mud of exposed seabeds," C-06N said.

"It's too confining. This isn't some drought on Mon Cala and she isn't a cocoon of wet mud. The air here is dry as dust," Joss argued.

Visma could barely hear any words. Blood rushed to her ears,

pounding so loudly it was a rhythmic churning that drowned out the argument between Elping and Joss. Unblinking, she stared at the Mon Calamari woman dying before her. Perhaps already dead.

There was a lip of thickened, dried shell over Ghal's torso. The dangerous grayish pathogen clung to the tips of her hands and feet, but were absent from the rest of her body. Beneath the translucent tissue, Ghal's chest had indeed stopped expanding and shrinking. The yellow eyes had started to dilate. If they did nothing, Ghal would die. She was being abandoned right before her eyes. Before she could think, Visma shot out a hand and grabbed the lip of dried skin. She began pulling with all her might.

"Visma! What are you doing?" Elping reached out to stop her. But Visma was stronger than Elping and held him off. She pried open the thick shellac of skin and a cracking noise sounded. Joss didn't hesitate. He, too, began to pull at a section of the hardened shell, and the crack extended around Ghal's chest and up across her face. A gluey, clear substance oozed from the crack, and soon they had a huge section free around her mouth.

Ghal's lips opened, and she gasped for air. Under the shell still enclosing her face, the yellow eyes blinked once.

"Help her!" Visma yelled.

Elping grabbed an insulated containment bag. "Put the pieces in here! Don't touch that gray stuff, whatever it is."

***"Ghal turned to see a monitor on the wall. On the other side, a stern-faced Arkanian woman in RDC gear stared back at her with arms crossed."***

Together, Elping, Joss, and Visma freed Ghal from her shell. Elping rinsed fluids over her as they continued to remove pieces, the liquid being collected in another containment bag. The gray material clung to the tips of her left fingers and left toes.

"We have to remove that. She might die," Elping said.

"Or infect the rest of us," Visma said.

They all nodded, grimly. Quickly, after administering a nerve block to her arm, Elping used an instrument that simultaneously amputated and cauterized several fingers. They repeated the process on two left toes. She would still be able to walk, eventually. The removed digits were dropped into the containment bag. With Elping's guidance and the readouts from the *Aurie*'s medical program, Ghal's hand and foot were bandaged carefully.

"Heart rate is back to a normal range. Respirations stabilizing," Elping said. He closed his eyes for a moment, and Visma knew exactly how relieved he was. She felt it too.

Ghal went from being a curled up tadpole shape to an exhausted, panting Mon Calamari on the gurney, utterly spent.

"Thank you," the Mon Calamari wheezed, "for saving my life. And now…" She took several more gasps, before finding the energy to speak more, "It's my turn to save yours."

Ghal could not speak another word, losing consciousness a moment later.

She did not know if she awoke after a few hours, or days. Her body felt tender and sore. Pain blossomed from the tips of her webbed appendages. Her left hand and foot were bandaged, and she peeked beneath them to see that she was now missing the tips of several fingers and two toes. Those were the areas where the blight had touched her, but it was gone now. She tried to move, and found that she could. Her chest was wondrously free of the confining shell of her hibernation

layer. She took a deep breath and it was marvelous.

She opened her eyes and found she was no longer in the small medical room. She was now situated in… an escape pod? Ah, it made sense. Not that she thought her rescuers planned on jettisoning her out into space, but rather, they considered this a makeshift quarantine. A hydration mister had been set up instead of an IV line. She was comfortably clothed in RDC garments. Her insides no longer felt like syrup, and her skin was growing more elastic and hydrated by the minute.

"You're awake."

Ghal turned to see a monitor on the wall. On the other side, a stern-faced Arkanian woman in RDC gear stared back at her with arms crossed.

"I am, thank you. Where am I?"

The Arkanian's eyes narrowed. "Please state your name and rank."

Ghal blinked. Her eyes felt sandy, her vision slightly blurry. "You already know my name, Lieutenant Tarko. Ask me a more useful question."

The hard look on Visma Tarko's face was replaced with surprise. "How did you…"

"I am Ghal Tarpfen. I was Chief and Head of Security on Starlight Beacon before it fell, and a ranking member of the Republic Defense Coalition. I was on the committee that cleared your promotion to Lieutenant. One of the youngest promotions in the Coalition, as I recall."

Visma opened her mouth, but had nothing to say.

"You don't remember me, do you?" Ghal chuckled.

The young Arkanian woman was visibly uncomfortable. "I…am Visma Tarko, you're right. You are now on board the *Aurie*. We are in the Occlusion Zone, about 300 parsecs away from Valo."

Ghal used to do the same thing. When anything was uncomfortable, just lean into protocol. Protocols and rules gave her backbone when sometimes she might not have the strength to stand on her own. She recognized fear when she saw it. This Arkanian wasn't simply afraid of Ghal, or the blight that had attacked her. She guessed that Visma lived in a constant state of fear, hidden by a sheen of formality and coldness. For Ghal, it had been a constant state of heartache that had the same effect.

She reached for a canister of hydration fluids and drank deeply, her eyes closed. It was infused with dried kelp. After draining it, she sighed. "By the depths, that was so delicious." Ghal turned back towards the monitor. "How long have you been in the O.Z.?"

"Several months. The Captains Adren, for less so." Visma leaned in. "What were you doing on that prison transport ship? How did you survive? What do you know about—"

"The second RDC lesson of interrogation, Lieutenant, is to ask one question at a time," Ghal said, her expression hardening. "The first lesson is to get to know your subject. You know nothing about me, do you?"

Visma stiffened. Ghal raised her injured hand. "I'm sorry. I'm not trying to be difficult, but clearly I am. Some habits are hard to shed. I'll answer all your questions. In the meantime, I'd like to thank you for saving my life."

"Well, it wasn't just me. It was Corporal Tsoo, really, who—"

"You don't need to parse the details. You saved my life. I was aware enough to know that much. I am grateful, Visma."

The lieutenant seemed a little taken aback at being addressed so informally. She even smiled a little.

"You're welcome?" the Arkanian answered uneasily.

Behind her, two human RDC captains and a younger corporal entered. Ghal remembered the captains well. She smiled when the entered, and the smile was warmly returned.

"Captain Pikka Adren, and Captain Joss Adren. I can't tell you how glad I am to see you, under the circumstances," Ghal said.

"It seems like a miracle that you're here. We were all distraught when we thought you'd died," Pikka said through the monitor. "When Velko Jahen received your message—"

"She did? It went through?" Ghal said, her hands shaking.

"Not all of it. It was filled with static, but enough of your message ▶

came through for us to know that you were kidnapped. That the Senate was compromised."

"Ghirra Starros, Jeni Wataro. And more," Ghal said quickly.

"We know that now. But we also thought—we'd lost you," Joss said.

"I thought my end was coming, too," Ghal said. "You changed that."

"Your vital signs are stabilizing," the younger RDC man said, smiling. "I'm Corporal Elping Tsoo. Your body's defense in creating that protective hibernation shell probably saved your life."

"It almost ended my life, too," Ghal added.

"Nevertheless, there are no other survivors on that Nihil prison ship. How are you feeling, Chief Tarpfen?" Elping asked.

Ghal touched the newly blunted ends of her barbels with bandaged fingertips, but she was thinking of Shenrick, the King of Mon Cala, and their ill-fated time together. She thought of Velko, and all the things she wished she had said back on Starlight Beacon. She still might never see her friend and colleague again. She thought of all the Nihil and their prisoners on the ship, their cold, lifeless bodies now adrift in the O.Z. "I've lost some things, but not as much as others have. I'm all right."

"Can we ask what happened on that ship?" Pikka inquired, arms crossed.

"I don't know when the sickness began. It was insidious. No one knew where it came from—if we were seeded with it, or we were…infected with it somehow. Other prisoners succumbing, turning almost to dust. I saw it starting to affect the wiring, and there were spots on the walls of the ship. The commanders asked for help, and were ignored by the other Nihil. We were all left adrift to die."

"You don't know what it is?"

"No. None of us did. It was definitely spreading, but it seems you need to touch it to be affected. Honestly, I'm not completely sure. The second it began to affect my hand and foot, my body shut down. That's how you found me, I guess."

Everyone looked slightly relieved. Perhaps Ghal really had left the blight behind her, and the Nihil. But it didn't mean there weren't more bad times ahead. On the monitor, she saw Joss bring a seat over to Pikka, who sat down on it, looking slightly tired and slightly more round-faced than before. Pikka leaned into the monitor to speak.

"We've put a lot of distance between us and that Nihil ship. If you have the strength, tell us what happened to you."

Ghal took another drink of her kelp infusion. "They had kidnapped me from Starlight Beacon. I was on a Nihil ship. Even though I'd freed myself, I ended up facing three vessels ready to fire on me. And they did, but I managed to get in an escape pod. In the aftermath of the wreckage, it drifted in space for days. I was picked up by another Nihil ship and imprisoned on a transport. They tried to get more information from me about the RDC, and the Jedi." She lifted her chin. "I wasn't cooperative."

Ghal didn't say what methods they had used to force her to speak. They'd withheld water until her skin peeled and bled painfully. Used injections to try to get her to reveal RDC secrets. Made up stories about finding Velko, finding Ghal's family members, and threatening to murder them using every horrific detail they could imagine.

In the silence, Joss looked sorrowful. He seemed to guess what she wasn't saying. "I'm so sorry, Ghal. As long as you're with us, you're safe."

"Don't be so sure of that," Ghal said. "The entire O.Z. is unsafe, but some areas are worse than others. You mentioned our coordinates. We're close to the Stormwall."

"Yes. Heading to Valo, for more supplies," Elping said.

"No. You have to turn around. Immediately. I thought you were headed in the opposite direction." She held her head, which began to spin. Maybe she had dreamed of telling them about the danger? About staying away from the Stormwall? By the depths, perhaps she had only told them in a fever dream.

"Ghal. What are you talking about?" Pikka said, her face blanching with concern.

"I heard things on the Nihil ship. Whispers of a plan that had something to do with the Stormwall. We have to get as far away as possible. Please. Everything you fought to save…" She swallowed, her throat feeling like a desert now. "We'll lose everything if we don't turn around."

Joss and Pikka glanced at each other, and now Joss went pale. Visma barked, "The decryptor. We haven't been checking it for the last few hours!"

Pikka, Joss, Elping, and Visma left Ghal in the emergency exit bay, running as fast as they could to the cockpit where the decryptor had been synced up with the ship's central computer. Elping began adjusting the knobs, trying to find a frequency with Nihil transmissions. It was nothing but silence and static. He checked the past feed, but nothing had come up. A fragment of optimism filled his face.

"Maybe we're okay?" he said, hopefully.

Joss and Pikka looked more worried than ever. "That doesn't mean anything."

"Who knows what Ghal could have heard? She was so sick for so long. She could have imagined it," Visma offered.

"Ghal wouldn't have said it if she didn't think it was a legitimate concern," Joss said.

"Which is what worries me, too," Pikka said.

Suddenly, a channel of static was replaced by the sound of yells and screams. At first, it sounded like a recording of a massacre.

"What is that?" Pikka said, covering her mouth. "Who are they killing?"

Visma reached out her arm, as if to hold back an unseen foe. "No. Listen." She paused, ear cocked to the vocalizations. Screams, yes, but also—whoops. Hollers.

*Laughter.*

"They're celebrating," Visma said. Confusion filled her. She turned to face Elping. "Why are they celebrating?"

Alarms began to blare from the console, and Visma felt her body react, an immediate reflex. She would have grabbed her blasters if she was armed. "What's going on?"

Joss's hand flew over the console, his eyes searching. Blips on the scanner began to appear. Visma knew exactly what they were even before Joss spoke.

"A Nihil ship just appeared in our area. No, two."

"No, *three*," Pikka said, her voice grave. She turned to everyone. "Elping, amp up our scav signal to protect us better."

"*Protect us?* We're a Republic Longbeam! We can't hide!" Elping said, hands up in helplessness.

"Blast, there are more ships appearing!" Joss said, his voice rising.

"They've come to find us. To destroy us," Visma said, grimly. "They must have known we rescued Ghal. She's a prize for them." Just when Visma and Elping had found some safety. Just when Ghal did, too. She noticed Pikka's hand unconsciously go to her belly, as it tended to do more and more often.

"I…don't think so," Pikka said, looking over the glowing blips on the screen. She pointed. "It's too much firepower to chase after only one ship. They're not here to surround us. Look at the formation. They've come here for something else." She looked Visma, Elping, and Joss and her face went ashen. "They've come for something bigger. Much bigger. And we're caught in the middle of it."

TO BE CONTINUED IN ISSUE 229!

***"Ghal touched the newly blunted ends of her barbels with bandaged fingertips, but she was thinking of Shenrick, the King of Mon Cala."***

**NEXT ISSUE:** "Chronicles of Corellia" by Alyssa Wong, only in ***Star Wars Insider***!

# JEDI MASTER'S QUIZ

Former Jedi and undercover rebel Ahsoka Tano endured more than most could imagine. *Star Wars: Ahsoka* placed the focus on the beloved character as she navigated new trials in the post-Imperial era. Follow your own path and showcase your knowledge by taking our Ahsoka quiz.

**Compiled by Jay Stobie**

## "THE JEDI FELL A LONG TIME AGO."

Demonstrate your Force abilities by answering these *Ahsoka* questions.

### SPECTRES OF THE PAST

**1: What did Ahsoka Tano seek at the ruins of the ancient Nightsister temple?**

A/ A journal
B/ A starship
C/ A Loth-cat
D/ A star map

**2: Where was Sabine Wren living while she was on Lothal?**

A/ City Hall
B/ A former Imperial barracks
C/ A farm
D/ A communications tower

**3: Which creatures greeted Ahsoka and Sabine when they first entered Seatos' atmosphere?**

A/ Mynocks
B/ Purrgil
C/ Gundarks
D/ Convorees

**4: What event did Ahsoka relive during her reunion with Anakin Skywalker?**

A/ Battle of Hoth
B/ Blockade of Naboo
C/ Siege of Mandalore
D/ Battle of Endor

**5: Who welcomed Ezra Bridger into their community during his time in the far galaxy?**

A/ The Dathomiri
B/ Howlers
C/ The Noti
D/ Local Bandits

### FROM REBELS TO REPUBLIC

**6: Who served the New Republic as a senator for Lothal?**

A/ Lor San Tekka
B/ Jai Kell
C/ Mon Mothma
D/ Cikatro Vizago

**7: How did Professor Huyang identify Baylan Skoll?**

A/ Scanned his lightsaber
B/ Recognized his face
C/ Consulted a Jedi Master
D/ Visited Coruscant

**8: Which former rebel became the chancellor of the New Republic?**

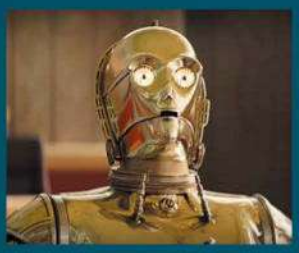
A/ Gial Ackbar
B/ Cassian Andor
C/ Nien Nunb
D/ Mon Mothma

**9: What type of starships flew alongside the *Ghost* to Seatos?**

A/ A-wings
B/ Nebulon-B frigates
C/ X-wings
D/ CR90 Corvettes

**10: Why did C-3PO visit the New Republic hearing about Seatos?**

A/ To deliver a message from Senator Leia Organa
B/ To testify against General Syndulla
C/ To speak with R2-D2
D/ To discuss a trade dispute



### HEIRS TO THE EMPIRE

**11: Which ship did Morgan Elsbeth construct to deliver Grand Admiral Thrawn from exile?**

A/ *Eye of Sion*
B/ *Heart of Defiance*
C/ *Vision of Allegiance*
D/ *Breath of Wisdom*

**12: Who did Baylan Skoll claim had spoken highly of Ahsoka Tano?**

A/ Mace Windu
B/ Anakin Skywalker
C/ Yoda
D/ Obi-Wan Kenobi

**13: What did Baylan Skoll do to the map containing Thrawn's coordinates?**

A/ Copied its contents
B/ Threw it into the ocean
C/ Buried it underground
D/ Destroyed it

**14: Where did Morgan Elsbeth find Grand Admiral Thrawn?**

A/ Kashyyyk
B/ Jedha
C/ Dagobah
D/ Peridea

**15: Which weapon did the Great Mothers give to Morgan Elsbeth?**

A/ Knife of Opress
B/ Shield of Zabrak
C/ Blade of Talzin
D/ Spear of Ventress

## "THIS IS A NEW BEGINNING."

Determine who spoke these memorable lines in *Ahsoka*:

1. "WHEN OBI-WAN TAUGHT ME, WE WERE KEEPERS OF THE PEACE."

2. "TO KILL HER WILL BE A SHAME. THERE ARE SO FEW JEDI LEFT."

3. "I DON'T NEED SABINE TO BE A JEDI. I NEED HER TO BE HERSELF."

4. "The Jedi Archives speak of intergalactic hyperspace lanes between galaxies."

5. "WELL, WHEN YOU'RE A GENERAL, YOU CAN DISOBEY ORDERS TOO."

## "IT'S BEEN A WHILE."

Identify the *Ahsoka* characters shown in the images below:

### HOW DID YOU DO?

**Did you learn one final lesson to answer our questions correctly?**

0–9: Perhaps it is time to begin again. Focus on your training.

10–19: Your skills are improving. I sense it.

20–24: Things have changed. You have mastered this quiz!

ANSWERS QUIZ: 1. D, 2. D, 3. B, 4. C, 5. C, 6. B, 7. A, 8. D, 9. C, 10. A, 11. A, 12. B, 13. D, 14. D, 15. C.

"THIS IS A NEW BEGINNING" 1. Anakin Skywalker, 2. Baylan Skoll, 3. Ahsoka Tano, 4. Huyang, 5. Hera Syndulla.

"IT'S BEEN A WHILE" 1. Jacen Syndulla, 2. Shin Hati, 3. Lieutenant Lander, 4. Marrok, 5. Ryder Azadi.

NEXT ISSUE

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE | ISSUE 227

# STAR WARS INSIDER

227

## Return of a Jedi

### Ezra Bridger's story: From Lothal to Peridea

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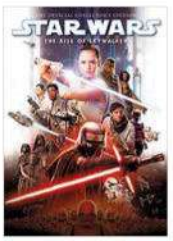

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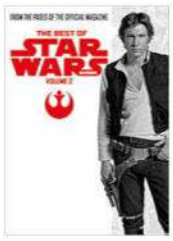

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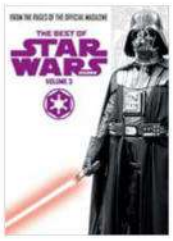

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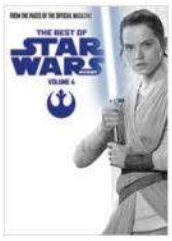

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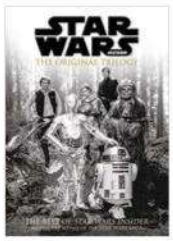

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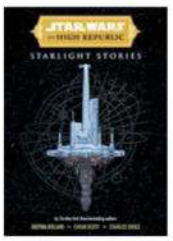

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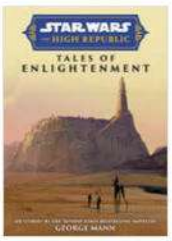

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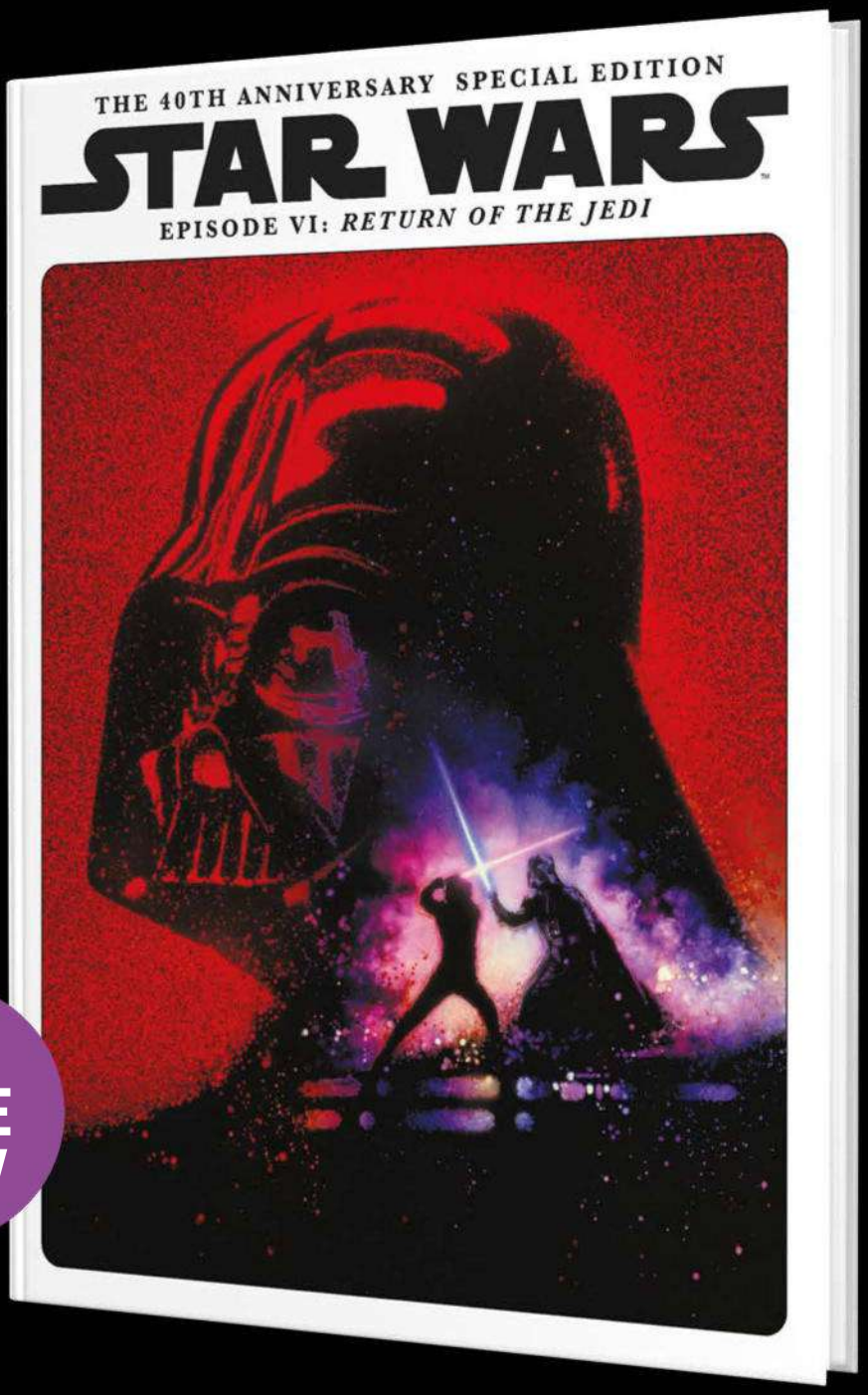


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